NEW LIGHT ON OLD SEALS FROM TIBET

A study of one hundred and one official seals from the thirteenth to the twentieth century

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Preface

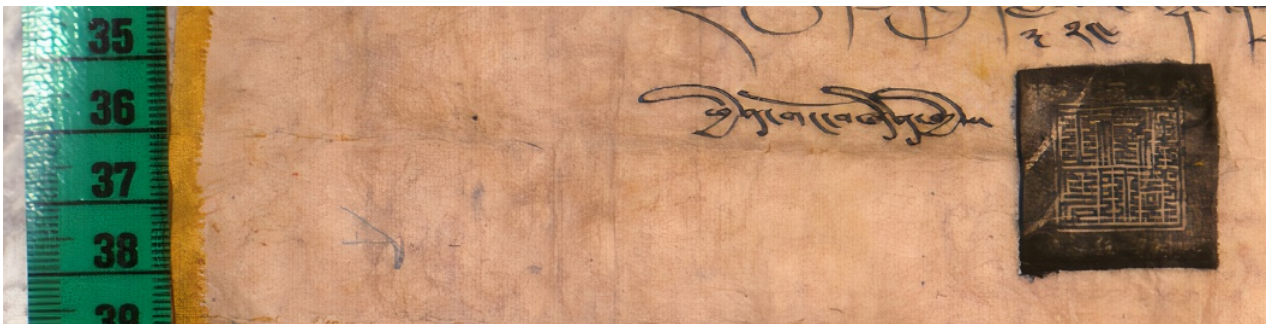
In order to have probative value, Tibetan-language legal documents required a seal impression as a generally recognized means of authentication. Furthermore, in many cases the seal impression alone provided information about the issuer of a document. It therefore goes without saying that seals were held in high esteem in Tibet. Apart from the practical functions, the history as well as the different scripts and languages of the seal impressions on Tibetan-language documents vividly reflect the various political, legal and cultural influences on Tibetan societies through the ages. This applies in particular to seals that represent authority. Therefore, expanding our knowledge of seals and sealing practices in Tibet makes a significant contribution to historical research.

Especially since the beginning of the millennium, the number of accessible diplomatic documents has increased considerably. This is mainly due to two projects on the digitization of Tibetan legal documents I led between 1999 and 2005 in Lhasa and Dharamsala. As a result, there are also far more sources available today for a systematic inventory and analysis of seal impressions than in the early years of diplomatics within the field of Tibetan Studies. It was therefore certainly good news that Dieter Schuh used the material to create a catalogue of seal impressions, which he published in 2018—or to be more precise—in 2019.[1] Unfortunately, the catalogue turned out to be a hasty compilation of often fuzzy images that by no means exhausts the possibilities and is not free from errors, lacunae and unfounded assumptions. It is no longer worth going into the reasons given for this, as they have long since proved to be unfounded. At the very least, the catalogue gave me reason to sift through and reorganize the material available to me, so that a first part can now be published in a systematic study.

The digitization projects were among the first of their kind in Germany. The results of the projects were managed in a database. The projects were based on the teamwork of many Tibetan, Chinese and German colleagues, all of whom I am very grateful to. Back then, digitization technology and digital storage options were not as advanced as they are today. Moreover, in face of the huge number of manuscripts to be scanned and the limited time available we could not afford to make close-up views for every seal impression. With so many very small seal impressions, this would have required the use of a macro lens, which the camera did not have. Nevertheless, most of the photographs are of good quality. The study presented here makes this abundantly clear. This does not mean that, given the very large number of scans, there are also those of inadequate quality, either because the original was already difficult to read or because there was a lack of care when taking the picture. To standardize and speed up the creation of thousands of images, the camera was aligned parallel to the template and the position of the camera was fixed. Moreover, all documents were photographed together with two measuring tapes. It is therefore easy to determine the sizes precisely, especially when you zoom in:[2]

[1] Schuh 2018 (ZAS 47). Although the printer's imprint of the ZAS journal has 2018 as the year of publication, the volume only came out in 2019. At that time, I had already informed colleagues like Schuh that the server had been switched off by the computing center of the university, but that all data sets were backed up and I was working intensively on solving the problem.

[2] Picture detail from KDL: 12 2-1/#/63/4/4 (ID 1717). See seal SEAL 3.



This work combines four different studies on impressions of official seals taken from documents found in Tibet. Seals of the Buddhist clergy and private seals are not included here. The first study deals with seal scripts that were no longer understood, pseudo-scripts and script-like patterns. The second study examines various other seals with inscriptions in different scripts and languages, including the seals of Pho lha nas and his son 'Gyur med rnam rgyal. The third study returns to the gold seals of the Fifth and Seventh Dalai Lamas and confirms the doubts I have expressed elsewhere about the existence of a second gold seal of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Finally, the fourth study describes the official seals with 'Phags pa script from the Sa skya-Yuan period to the dGa' ldan pho brang period. Together, the four studies cover one hundred and one seals and their variants from the thirteenth to the twentieth century. All seals are labeled consecutively with SEAL 1, SEAL 2, SEAL 3 etc. The respective variants are distinguished by a, b, c etc. An index of the names of all known seal owners allows direct access to the corresponding seal descriptions.

For this work, the images of the seal impressions were carefully cropped and enlarged. In addition, legible images of the documents from which the seal impressions originate have been added. While shorter documents immediately follow the corresponding seal impressions, the longer ones are included in the first appendix. The second appendix presents the seal of a Tibetan queen, which is now preserved in a private collection. It was not the intention to reproduce all available impressions of a seal here. This applies above all to those seals of which numerous impressions are known. In such cases, the impressions of good quality were selected.

This catalog sheds new light on the history and identification of seal impressions from Tibet. It demonstrates that the origin and the history of the seals' use are often far more complex than previously assumed. Even if not everything could be clarified in this respect and new things will certainly come to light in the future, I hope that this catalog will prove to be a useful and reliable addition to previous works on the subject, especially to the seminal book of Dieter Schuh on Tibetan seal inscriptions in 'Phags pa script, published in 1981, and to the very useful catalog of impressions of seals preserved mainly in the Potala and the Nor bu gling kha, published in 1991 by Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei.[3]

[3] Schuh 1981; Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991.

1. Diving into a Cycle of Illusion and Rebirth

This chapter focusses on seals that were still used as official seals, but whose inscriptions had apparently become completely irrelevant. In addition, it deals with pseudo-scripts and script-like seal impressions. Most of the seals presented here are from the period of the early dGa' ldan pho brang.

1.1 On the Recycling and Imitation of Old Seals in Tibet

Regarding several seals of this period, most of them classified as seals of the Tibetan regents, Schuh describes the lettering of the seal inscription with the Tibetan expression *hor yig brdzus ma*,[4] meaning an illegible, merely pretended or simulated Mongolian lettering or pseudo script. Here, the term Mongolian lettering or *hor yig* apparently refers to the 'Phags pa script called by Tibetans *hor yig gsar pa*, "new Mongolian lettering". Schuh does not give a reference for the expression *hor yig brdzus ma*. However, I know from his book on Tibetan seals[5] that he is familiar with the catalog of seal impressions included in the book called "Guide for the Blind" (*Long ba'i dmigs bu*), which uses this expression to describe some of the seal impressions listed. The "Guide for the Blind" was probably compiled by *bka' drung* Nor rgyas nang pa during the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.[6] Be that as it may, a closer

[4] Schuh 2018, 121—139.

[5] Schuh 1981.

[6] The *Long ba'i dmigs bu* is an edited volume that brings together different texts for government officials. The Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC) offers digital copies of a manuscript comprising eighty-seven folios (W1PD96313). The full title reads: *gzhung zhabs la nye bar mkho ba Zbla dpon rim byon gyi lo rgyus/ tham deb/ Zgong ma'i khri lo/ yig bskur rnam gzhag sogs kyi deb ther long ba'i dmigs bu zhes bya ba* "The book titled 'Guide of the Blind' on what is urgently needed for government officials, (namely) a history of the successive lamas and secular chiefs, a book of their seals, the emperors' reign years, a letter writing manual, etc." The manuscript has no colophon. The seal impressions are missing in the seal catalog. They were probably intended to be drawn, stamped or glued in later, as space was kept free for them. Starting on folio eighty-five recto there is a mostly completely faded text, which contains in the title the Water-Monkey year and its Western equivalent 1932–1933. The text was written with a modern writing instrument. The same writing instrument was evidently used to add the title later to the table of contents (*dkar chag)*, which precedes the actual text. If, as Jansen (2022, 164–165n42) assumes, the writing instrument was a ballpoint pen, this addendum would have been written in the 1950s at the earliest. My impression is that the text was originally written with a pencil, and the first lines were later redrawn with another writing instrument. The BDRC attributes the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* to Nor rgyas nang pa dBang 'dus tshe ring as its author.
The BDRC holds digital copies of a second version of the manuscript published in 1981 as a photo offset in Delhi (W23160). It lacks the chapter on the seal book not only in the title, but also in the manuscript itself. The description does not name an author but indicates that the text was written in the early twentieth century. Schuh had a manuscript of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* for his work on seals, which "at least contains a few seal impressions" (Schuh 1981, 2). The compilation of documents on Tibetan history published by Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs and Ma grong Mi 'gyur rdo rje in 1991 contains the edition of another version, which only consists of the first

analysis of the inscriptions classified by Schuh as *hor yig brdzus ma* reveals that there is not a single case of a simulated Mongolian lettering. In fact, very few seals identified by him as *hor yig brdzus ma* show the mere imitation of a script, although not the one called *hor yig*, while those seals that really seem to show a *hor yig brdzus ma* were not identified as such by him.

Most of the seals to be discussed here show a script that was used quite frequently for seal inscriptions and that is still popular in variations for this purpose to this day. I am no expert on this script, but in any case, its origins predate the Yuan dynasty. In Chinese, the script is called *jiu die wen* (九疊文), "script folded nine times," or *jiu die zhuan* (九疊篆), "seal script folded nine times." The vertical and horizontal lines of this script follow either a slightly curved or an angular zigzag pattern. The number of curves or kinks does not necessarily have to be nine. The number nine simply stands for "many". How many bends there are depends on design aspects, the available space, the number of strokes and their arrangement. This is why you often find different designs for one and the same Chinese character.

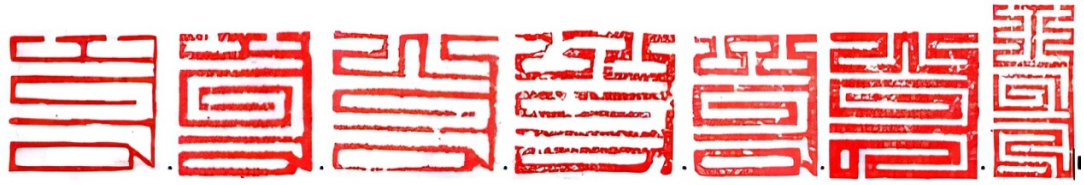
In the Shanghai Museum, I have seen examples of this seal script on official seals from the Song dynasty (960–1279). The seal of the following impression from the Northern Song, for example, is dated 989 AD.[7]

two chapters of the text, namely the history of the successive lamas and chiefs and the book of seals (Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 3–83). There, the text is entitled *Deb ther long ba'i dmigs bu dang tham deb*, suggesting that the seal book is not part of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, but an appendage to it. Nowhere is it mentioned that the work, as it is otherwise known, has more than the two chapters presented by the editors. It is therefore quite possible that the manuscript they used consisted only of these two chapters. However, the seal book presented by them contains seal impressions that are not listed at all in the BDRC version, including some that date from the time after the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* was presumably written, for example official seals of the sTag brag regent (r. 1941–1950). In his introduction to the document compilation, Ma grong Mi 'gyur rdo rje writes that the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and the seal book were most likely written by *bka' drung* Nor rgyas nang pa at the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. He bases this assumption on the considerations put forward by an unknown author in the introduction to a seal book titled *Tham deb mun sel sgron me*, for which the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and its seal book were taken as basis. However, the *Tham deb mun sel sgron me* manuscript Ma grong Mi 'gyur rdo rje saw did not contain any images of seal impressions. Ma grong Mi 'gyur rdo rje also mentions that the seal book attached to the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* contains numerous seal impressions that are not included in the seal book of the highest monk official office in the Tibetan government, the *yig tshang*. (Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, introduction 16–17)

[7] Shanghai bowuguan n.d., 13.

Since the Song dynasty, the script has often been used for inscriptions on official seals.

The style of the *jiu die zhuan* was not restricted to seals with inscriptions in Chinese characters. It had also influenced the 'Phags pa script as it was used for inscriptions on seals during the Yuan dynasty. The zigzag style allowed the seal cutters to create different variations of the same letter. This can be demonstrated, for example, by the transcription of the Chinese word for seal, *yin* (印), in 'Phags pa script, which is often found on seal inscriptions from the Yuan dynasty:[8]



Perhaps for this reason the nine-folded script can sometimes be mistaken for a pseudo-Mongolian script. Of course, this does not say that there are no examples of a pseudo-Mongolian script at all.

To begin with, I would like to briefly illustrate how the characters in the *jiu die zhuan* were created. For this purpose, I have chosen the two oldest such seal impressions on documents preserved in Tibet known to me, referred to below as SEAL 1 and SEAL 2. They were stamped on Mongolian-language imperial documents of the Yuan period issued for Tibetan recipients.[9]

The tracings, which have been added to the illustrations of SEAL 1 and SEAL 2 below, were taken from the title page of Karl-Heinz Everding's publication on Yuan documents. In his book, the seal inscriptions have been transcribed and translated by Prof. Wang Ping.[10] The Chinese characters are not provided. Nevertheless, it can be shown that the transcriptions and translations of the two inscriptions are not correct.

[8] See Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 16, 18, 20, 21, 22; Shanghai bowuguan n.d., 14; Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10. It should be noted that the word *yin* in Chinese can refer to any kind of stamp, but in our context, it stands for seals and their impressions.

[9] The left seal impressions were copied from Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 1 (document issued by Khubilai Khan, r. 1279–1294, in 1277 or 1289) and no. 13 (document issued in 1320 by the empress dowager).

[10] "Siegel der Begutachtung durch den Kaiser", "Lang lebe der Kaiser-Siegel". See Everding 2006, vol. 1 and vol. 2: explanations of the signets. In his forewords, Everding thanks Prof. Wang Ping for the transcription and translation of the seal inscriptions. Without any analysis or bibliographical reference, the same translation of the first seal impression can also be found in Schuh 2023, 550–551.

SEAL 1

The first seal inscription has been transcribed as *yu lan zhi bao* and translated as "Seal of the Emperor's Approval." Written in classical Chinese characters *yu lan zhi bao* should be written like this: 御覽之寶. The last character has the meaning "treasure" but was also one of the two terms used to mean "imperial seal."[11] *Zhi* (之) is the possessive marker. *Lan* (覽) means "to look at", "to read" or "to visit." For *yu* (禦 or 御) the dictionaries provide the meaning "to resist, to withstand" but also "imperial", "from/of the emperor." Thus, the translation "Seal of the Emperor's Approval" or "Seal of Imperial Approval" reproduces the Chinese text *yu lan zhi bao* very well.

If you compare the seal inscription with the classical Chinese characters, you can hardly recognize any similarity at first glance. How is it then possible to check whether the transcription is correct? Obviously, the characters of the nine-folded script cannot be derived directly from the traditional characters. The nine-folded seal script is based on the so-called small seal script or *xiao zhuan* (小篆). To this day, the characters of this small seal script can best be looked up in the *Shuowen Jiezi* (說文解字), a dictionary that was written around 100 AD.[12]

Transferred into the small Chinese seal script the characters look like this:

For comparison, a corresponding seal impression of the Qianlong emperor in the small seal script is displayed below.[13]

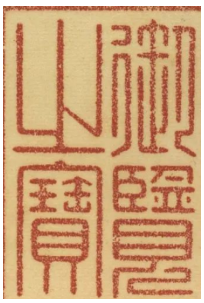
Only the left two columns are of interest to us here, because they display the four characters in the small seal script as shown above. The column on the right shows the two characters for Qianlong. When

[11] The other term was *xi* (璽).

[12] See https://archive.org/details/Shuowen_Jiezi/mode/2up; http://www.shuowenjiezi.com/.

[13] Copied from the auction website http://www.ikck.com/article-2271 (March 26, 2024).

comparing this seal with our first Yuan seal we see that except for the character 覽 (*lan*), all the characters of the nine-folded script can also be easily identified on the Yuan seal.

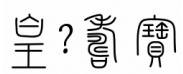


Apparently the second character of the seal inscription discussed here was misidentified. No wonder, then, that this character was identified differently by the Hong Kong scholar Kai-lung Ho (何啟龍). He read the inscription as *yu qian zhi bao* (御前之寶).[14] Transferred into the small Chinese seal script the character 前 looks like this:

It is obvious that the second character on the seal impression shown here derived from *qian* 前 and Kai-lung Ho's reading is correct. *Qian* means "front" but also "before." The entire inscription can now be translated as "Seal of the Emperor's Presence."

SEAL 2

The second seal impression from the Yuan period has been transcribed as *huang zhen shou bao* and translated as "'Long Live the Emperor' seal." The first character starting from the right should be the 皇, known from the word *huangdi* (皇帝). For the second, transcribed as *zhen*, I have no idea. Dictionaries list more than a hundred characters transcribed as *zhen*, but none seem to offer a plausible meaning. *Shou* must be 壽, "longevity." The character for *bao* should be the same as on the previous seal impression. Transferred into the small seal script the three characters, which we identified so far, look like this:



For the character *shou*, the *Shuowen Jiezi* offers the alternative .

[14] Ho 2008, 48.

A comparison of the small seal characters with the second Yuan seal impression shows that the penultimate character was obviously misidentified.

There is no similarity at all. I have not yet been able to find a correct reading of the inscription in Chinese secondary sources. However, the solution is not that difficult. The seal was stamped on all documents of the empress dowager. The Chinese word for empress dowager is *huangtaihou* (皇太后). Turned into the small seal script this word is written like this:

Together with the character for *bao*, they correspond to the inscription discussed here. Therefore, the correct translation is "Seal of the Empress Dowager."

Now, let's turn to seal impressions with an inscription in the nine-folded script that were actually or allegedly used by the first regents (*sde srid*) of the dGa' ldan pho brang government. All impressions are of black color.

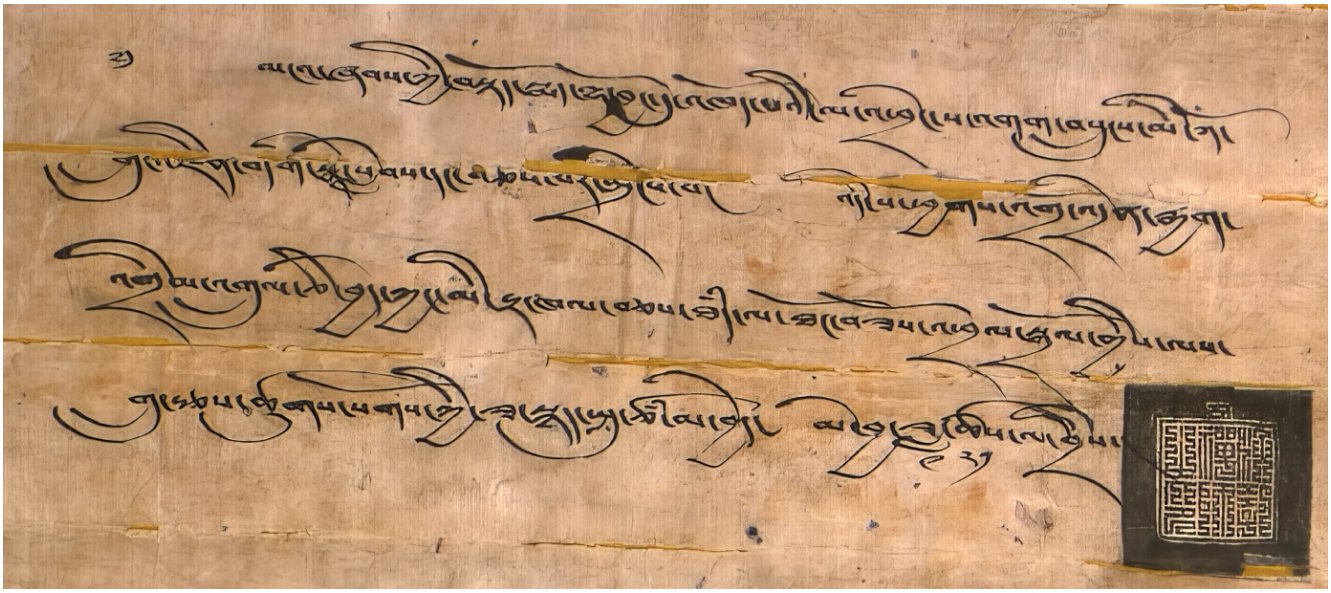
From the first regent, bSod nams rab brtan alias bSod nams chos 'phel (1595–1658, r. 1642–1658), we know that he used two seals with such an inscription, SEAL 3 and SEAL 4a. Both show the Tibetan *dbu can* letter *ga* in the upper rim.

SEAL 3

Seal impression from a document issued in 1657 (*me bya*)[15]

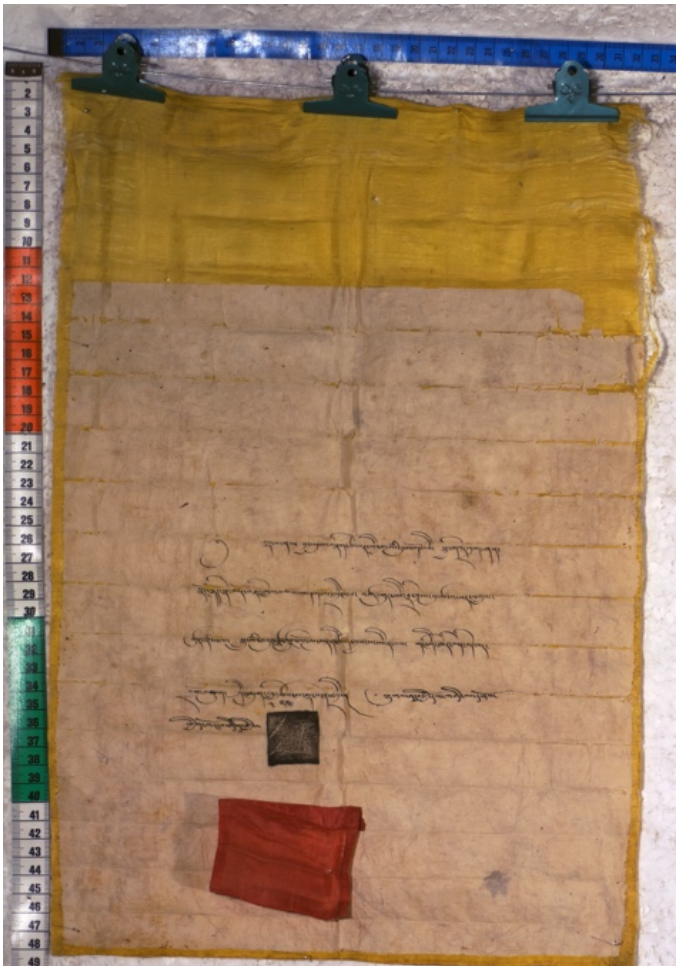
2.8 x 2.8 (1.8 x 1.8) cm

[15] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/5/4 (ID 1718).



Seal impression from a document issued in 1655 (*shing lug*)[16]

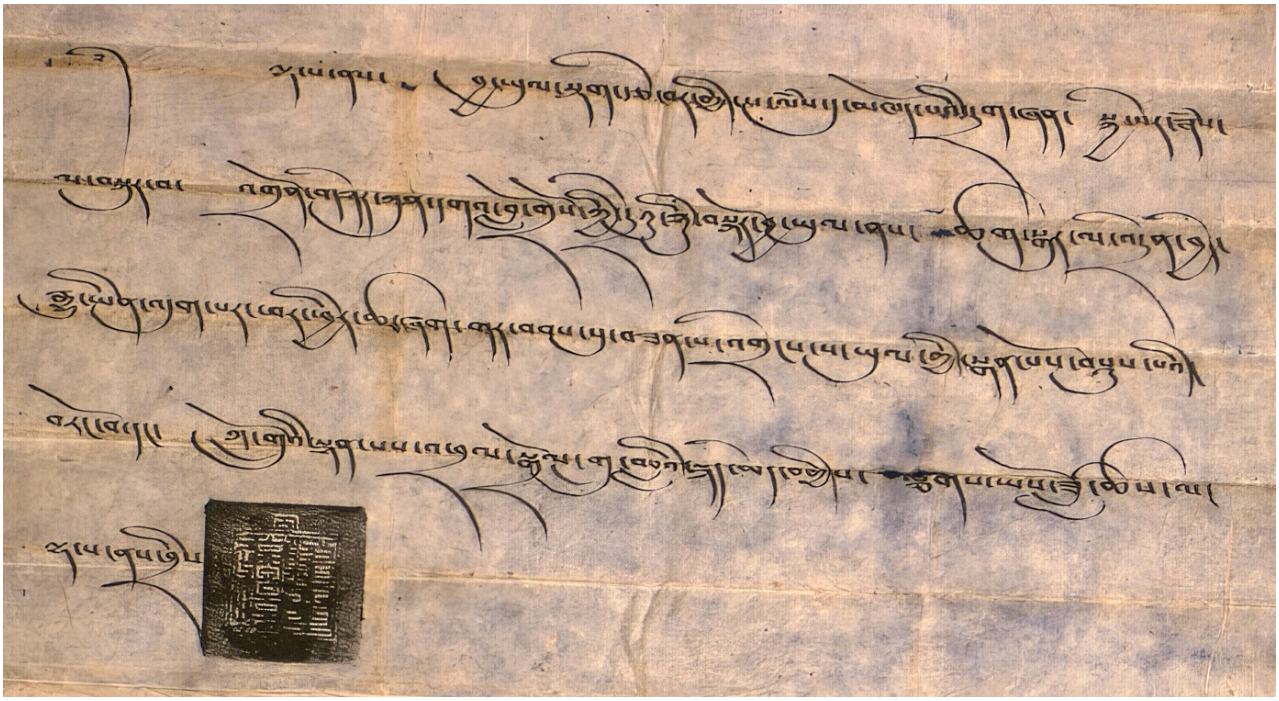
2.8 x 2.8 (1.8 x 1.8) cm



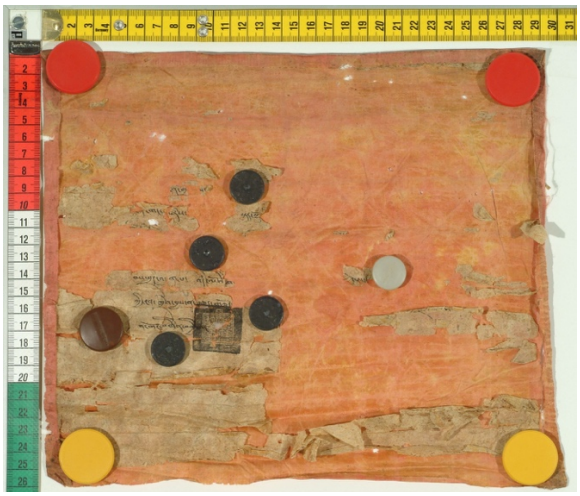
[16] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/4/4 (ID 1717).

Seal impression, measuring 2.8 x 2.8 (1.9 x 1.9) cm, from a document issued in 1651 (*lcags yos*)[17]

[17] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/18/4 (ID 1731).



Seal impression from an undated document[18]



2.8 x 2.8 (1.8 x 1.8) cm

The seal inscription says *yan jiao chanshi zhi yin* (演教禅师之印), "seal of the meditation master Yanjiao." Written in the small seal script, the characters look like this:

The seal itself, i.e. the imprinting device, is made of copper with a wooden knob. Its height is given as 5.9 cm, its side length as 2.9 cm. It was kept in the Potala but is now preserved in the Tibet Museum. A cloth strip attached to the original seal has a Tibetan description indicating that it is the seal of *sde*

[18] AA: 0802_AA_2_1_170.

srid Ngag dbang rin chen.[19] Ngag dbang rin chen was the oldest son of *sde srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho and was named by him as his successor as regent when he stepped back in 1703. He was removed from office in 1706 by lHa bzang Khan.[20]

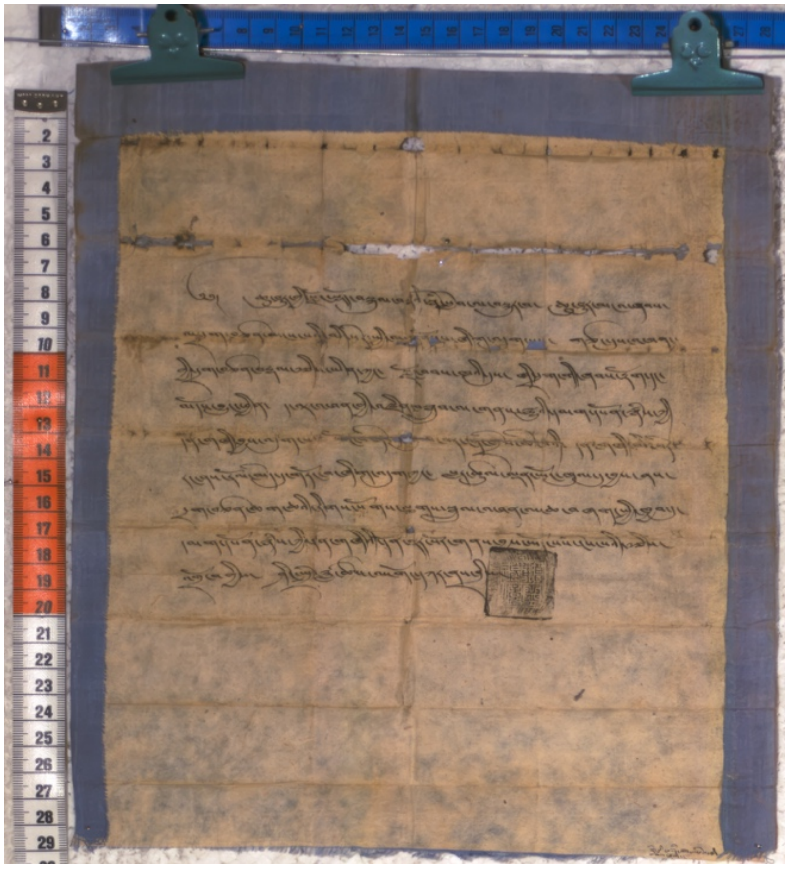
The seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* explains that the seal was used by the regent bSod nams chos 'phel but that the seal book of the highest monk official office in the Tibetan government (*yig tshang*) only mentions Ngag dbang rin chen as its owner.[21] So far, I have only seen documents with an impression of this seal that were issued by the first regent. I have no information about the origin of the seal.

SEAL 4a

There are various impressions of the second such seal of the first regent in the database.

Seal impression from a document issued in 1644 (*shing spre*)[22]

2.6 x 2.6 (1.8 x 1.8) cm

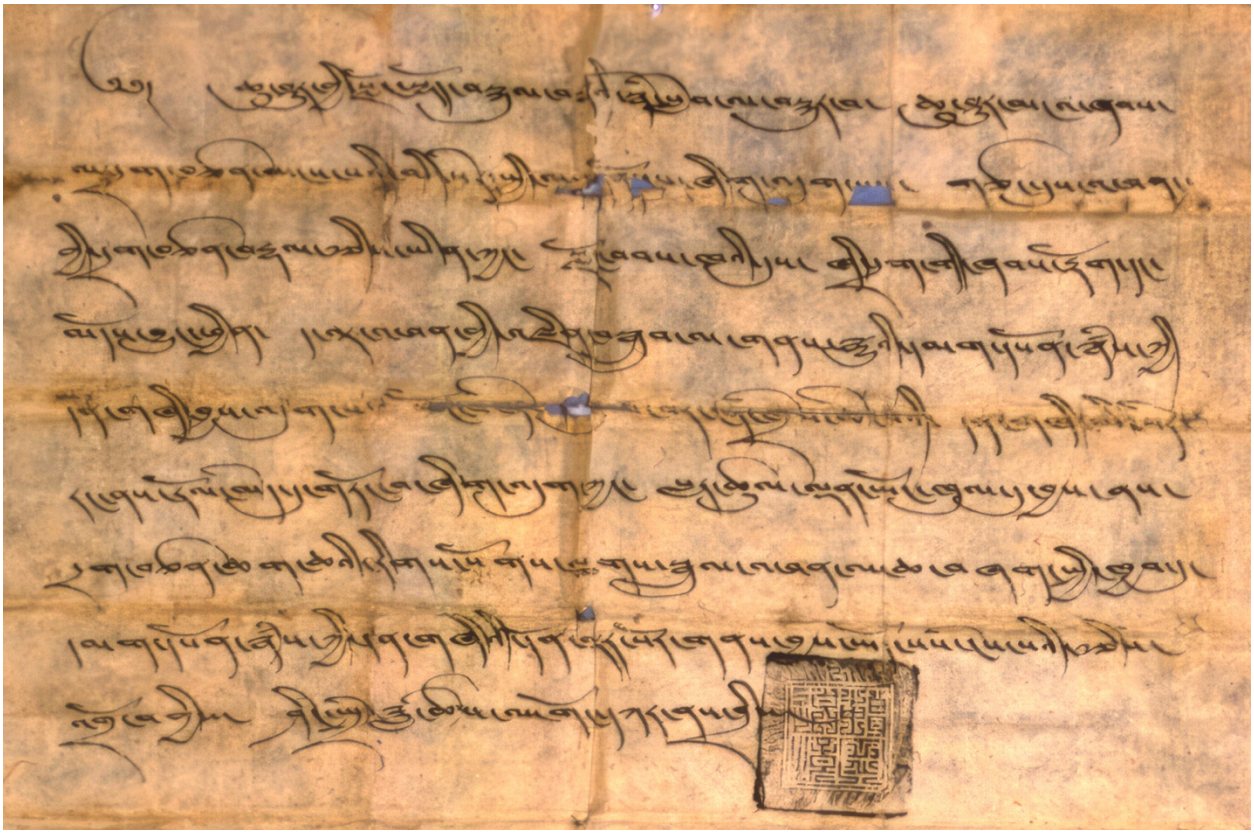


[19] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 72.

[20] Petech 1959, 380–381 (based on the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, corresponds Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 11–12); Petech 1972, 9–10, 17; Dungkar 2343.

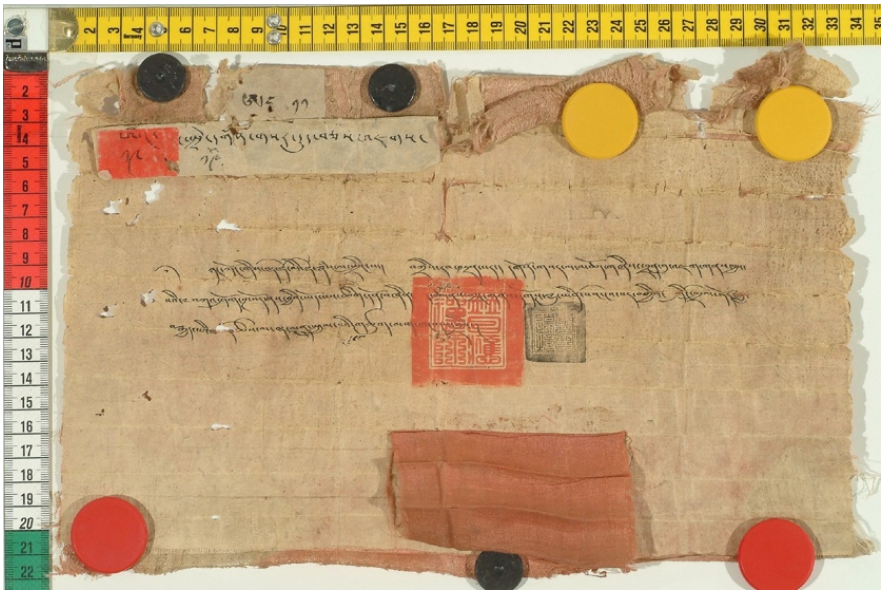
[21] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 51; *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 24v (explanation written in red ink).

[22] KDL: 012 2-1/#/112/1/4 (ID 2293).



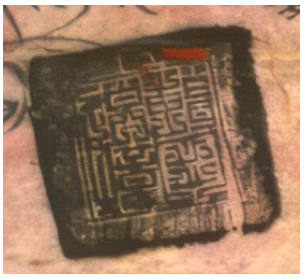
Seal impression from a document issued in 1644 (*shing sprel*)[23] (The red seal impression is described under SEAL 20.)

2.6 x 2.6 (1.8 x 1.8) cm

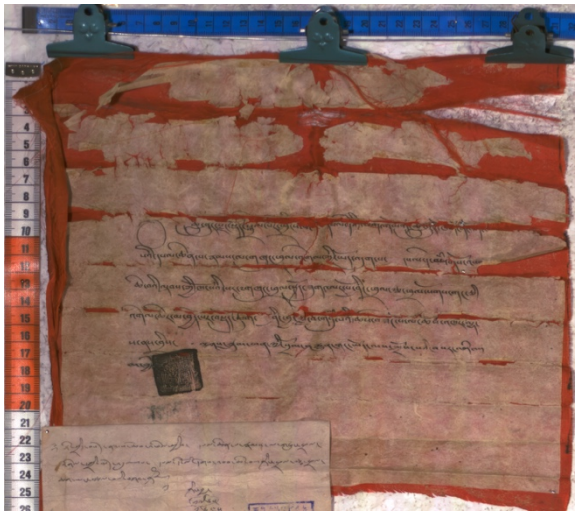


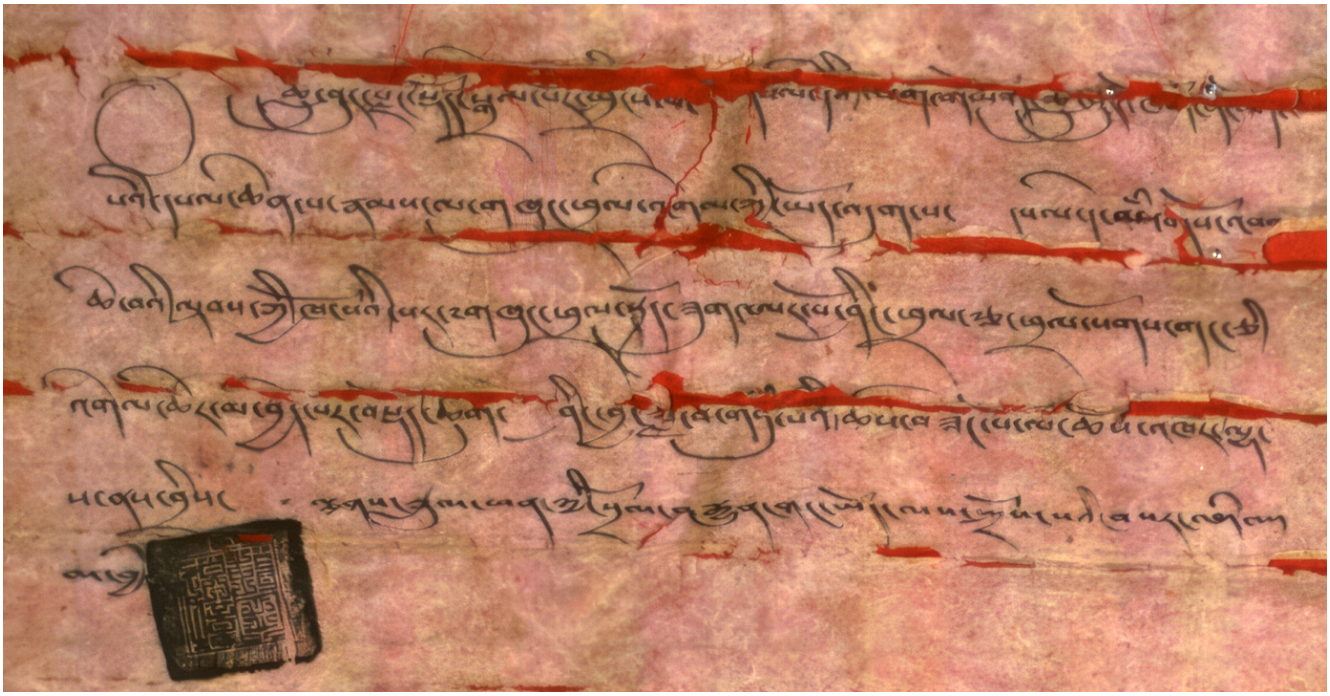
[23] AA: 0795_AA_2_1_163.

Seal impression from a document issued in 1645 (*shing bya*)[24]



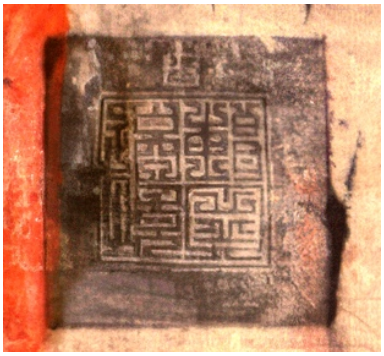
2.6 x 2.5 (1.8 x 1.8) cm



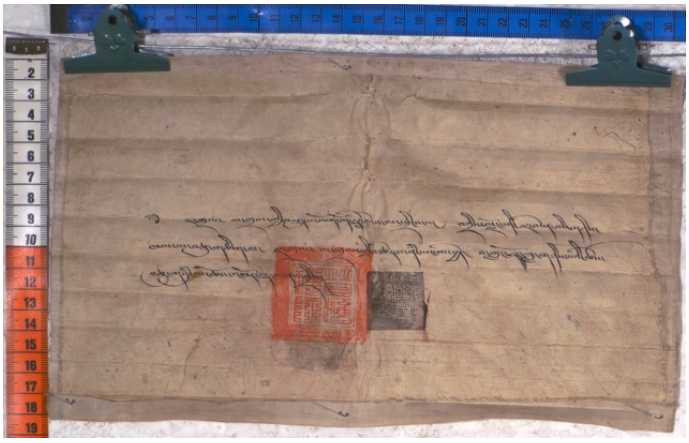


[24] KDL: 012 2-1/#/113/6/4 (ID 2308).

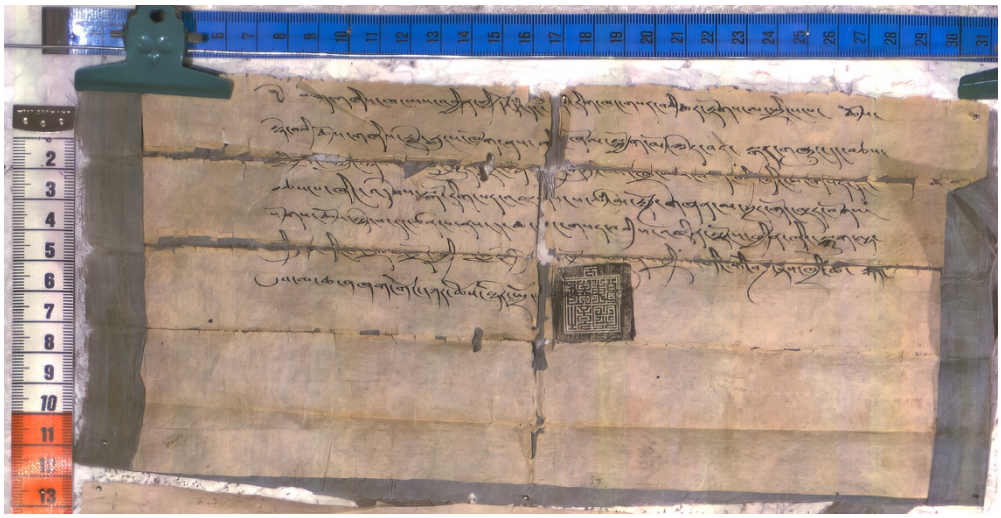
Seal impression from a document issued in 1649 (*sa glang*)[25] (The red seal impression is described under SEAL 20.)



2.6 x 2.6 (1.7 x 1.8) cm

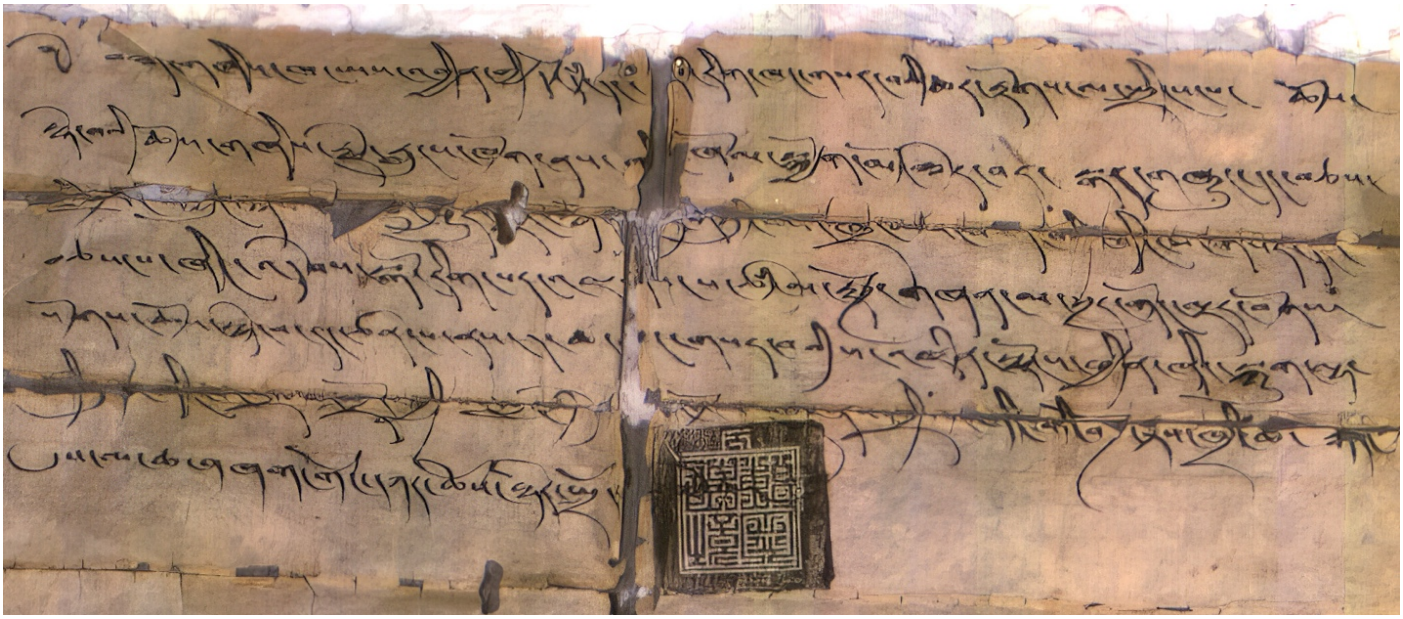


Seal impression, 2.6 x 2.5 (1.8 x 1.8) cm, on an incomplete and undated document.[26]



[25] KDL: 012 2-1/#/7/5/4 (ID 1110).

[26] KDL: 012 2-1/#/115/16/4 (ID 2338).



The inscription says *ji ding bianjing* (辑定边境), meaning something like “fixing the border” or “establishing the border”. Written in the small seal script, the characters of the inscription look like this:

SEAL 4b

Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei present the impression of a seal with the same inscription, having a side length of 2.3 cm.

The authors identify it as the reproduction of a larger ivory seal, on which the Tibetan letter *ga* in the upper rim is missing.[27] According to their explanation the larger seal was first granted in 1842 by the Daoguang (道光) emperor (1782–1850, r. 1821–1850) to the Seventh Panchen Lama Blo bzang bstan pa’i nyi ma (1782–1853). However, such an assumption seems unlikely. Both the script used, and the inscription itself clearly refer to the Ming dynasty as a background.

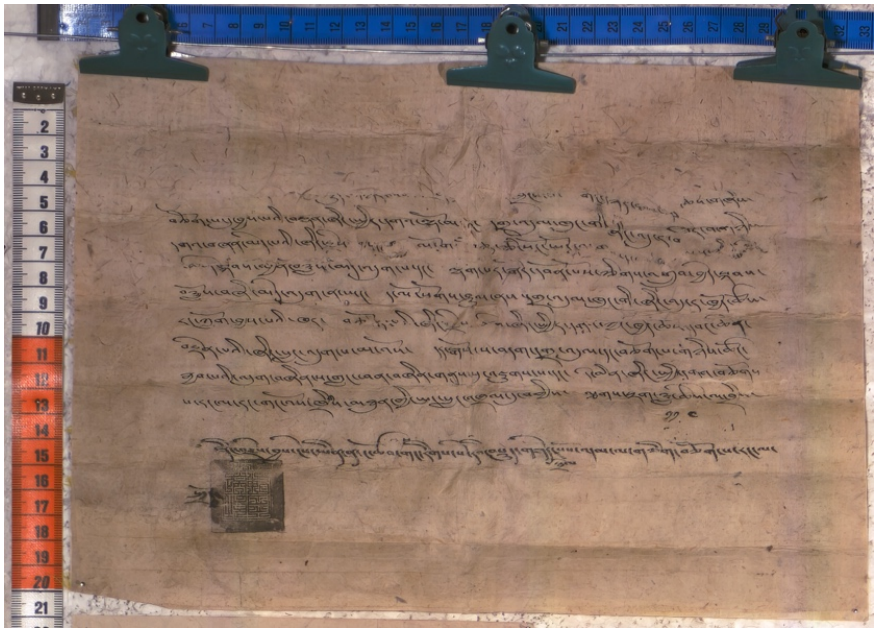
Before I come to the larger seal (SEAL 4f), I would like to present a few seal impressions that provide clues as to where the seal of the first regent might have come from.

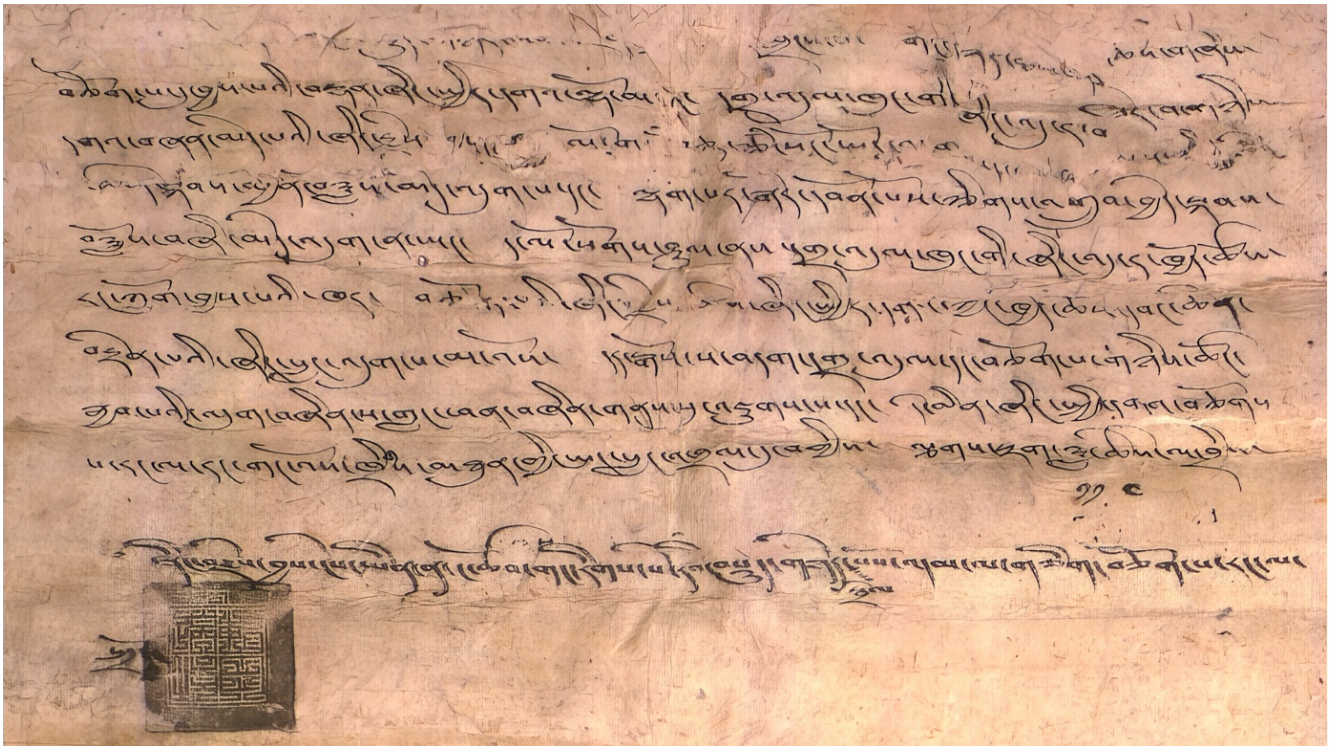
[27] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 77. Note that all seal impressions reproduced by Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei are red in color, regardless of how they appear on historical documents.

SEAL 4c

The following document has been dated by the Tibetan Archives 1650 (*lcags stag*) and consequently attributed to the first regent bSod nams rab brtan alias bSod nams chos 'phel.[28] The seal impression not only differs significantly in its dimensions from the ones presented under SEAL 4a, but also shows minimal differences in the way the character *ding* (定) is written. However, the *dbu can* letter *ga* in the upper edge seems to indicate the same seal owner as the impressions under SEAL 4a.

2.9 x 2.9 (2.0 x 2.0) cm



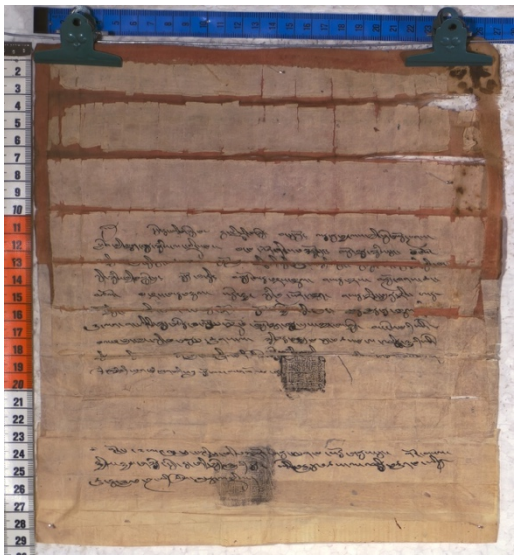


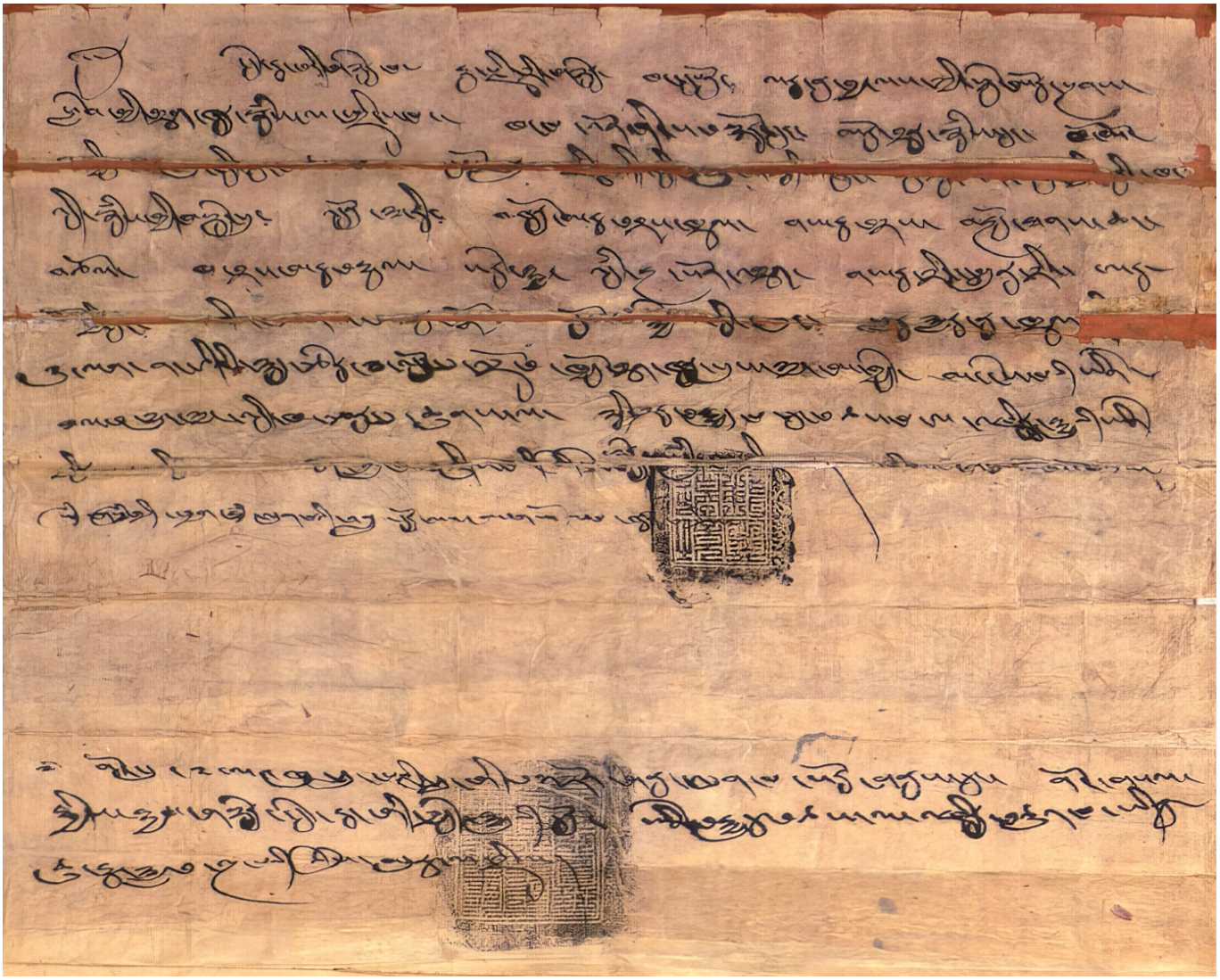
[28] KDL: 012 2-1/#/114/1/4 (2313).

SEAL 4d

An undated document shows the impression of a seal with the same inscription and the same side length as SEAL 4a.[29]

2.6 x 2.6 (1.8 x 1.8) cm





[29] KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/4/3 (ID 992).

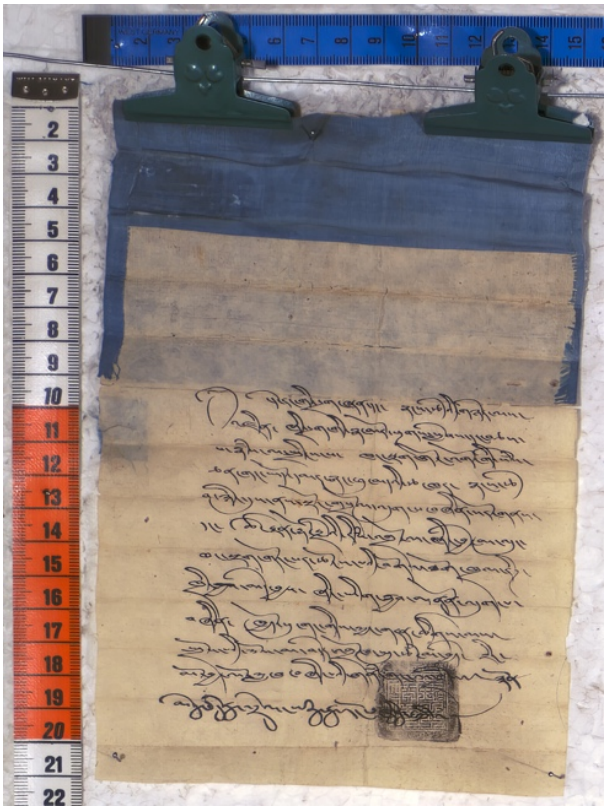
Due to the damage to the paper along the fold, it is not possible to tell whether the upper edge of the seal impression originally also showed the Tibetan letter *ga* or possibly another letter.

A later confirmation at the bottom of the document dated the Water Horse year (*chu rta*, probably 1582) refers to its issuer as *a khu drung pa*.

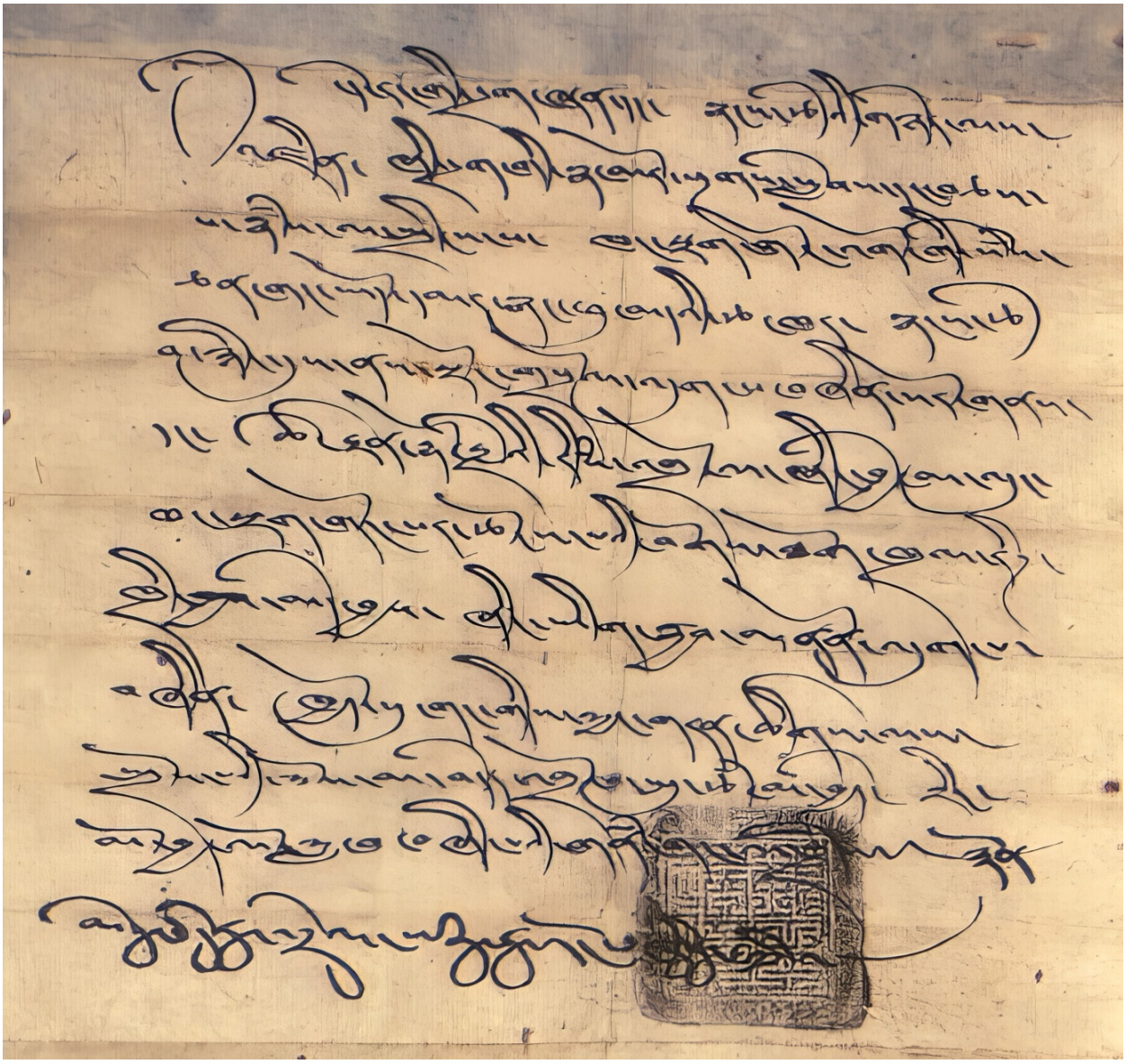
As explained below (see SEAL 11), *a khu drung pa* was a designation for the successive sKyid shod *sde pa*, who ruled the sKyid shod area up to the end of the seventeenth century. The seal impression of the confirmation remark is discussed under SEAL 5.

A document issued in 1584 (*shing bya*) shows at the bottom another impression of this seal.[30]

2.5 x 2.4 (1.9 x 1.8) cm



[30] KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/2/3 (ID 1041).



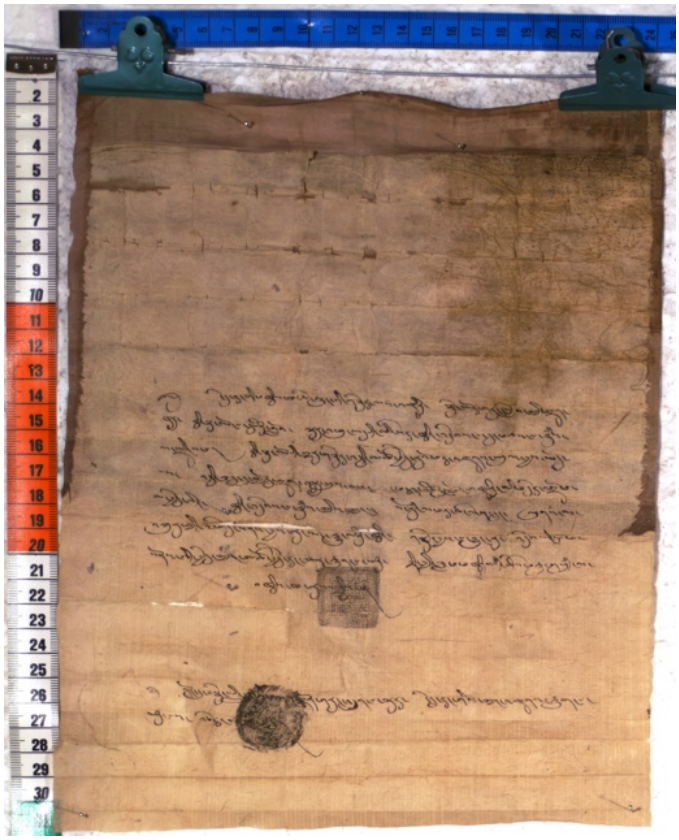
There seem to be a letter depicted in the upper edge of the impression, but unfortunately it is illegible.

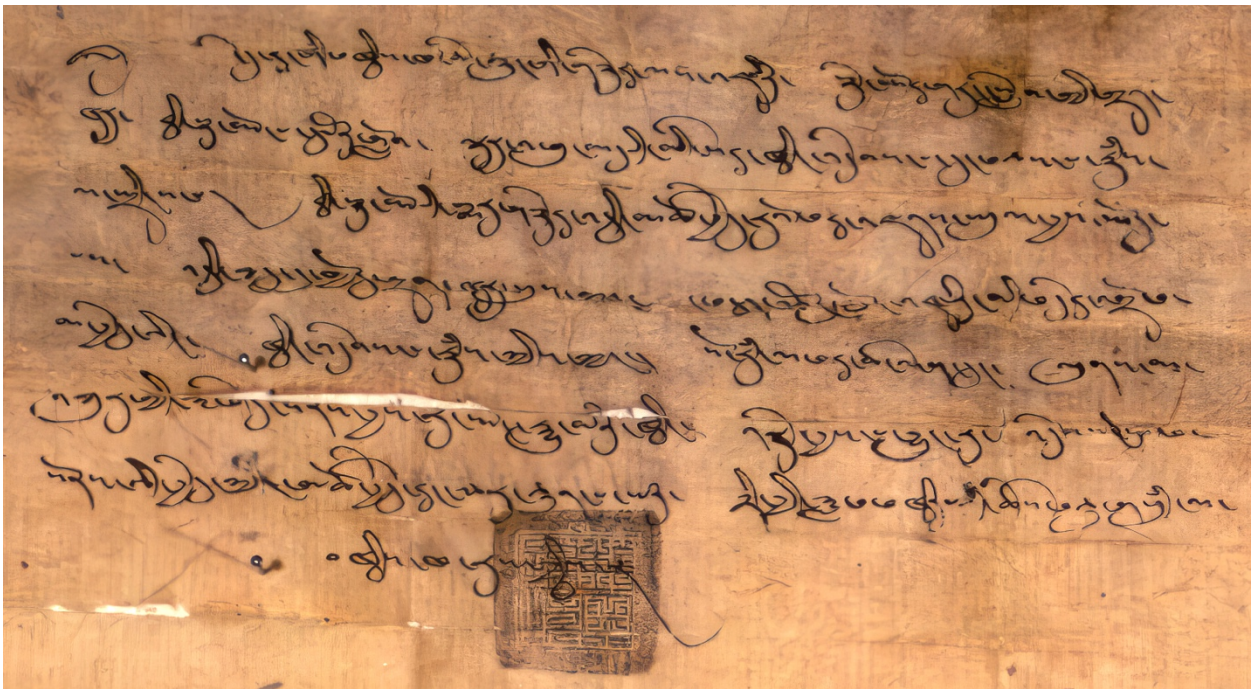
The document does not mention the name of its issuer. The Archives of Tibet Autonomous Region give his name as bKra shis rab brtan. I cannot say how the archives came up with this name. If it is correct, however, it must be sKyid shod *sde pa* bKra shis rab brtan, the father of gYul rgyal nor bu mentioned below under SEAL 11.

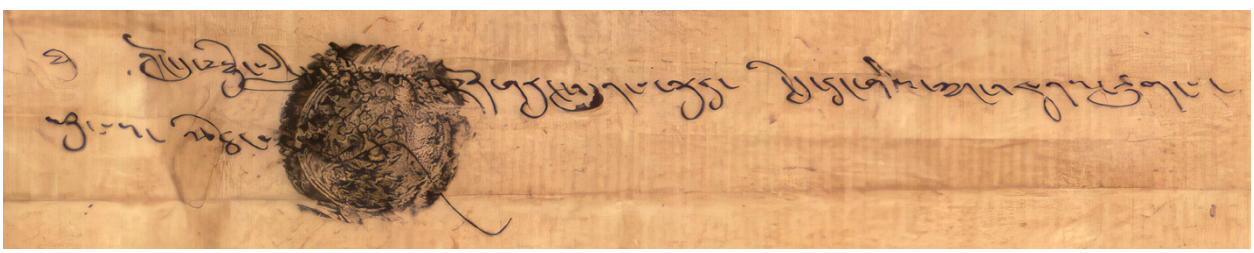
On the seal impression at the end of the following document,[31] the *dbu can* letter *sa* can be seen in the middle of the upper edge. The document was issued in a Wood Bird year, corresponding to 1564 or 1624. The undated confirmation at the bottom of the document mentions as issuer *sde pa'i drung*, which is one of the titles used to refer to the sKyid shod *sde pa*.

[31] KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/9/3 (ID 1048).

2.5 x 2.4 (1.8 x 1.8) cm

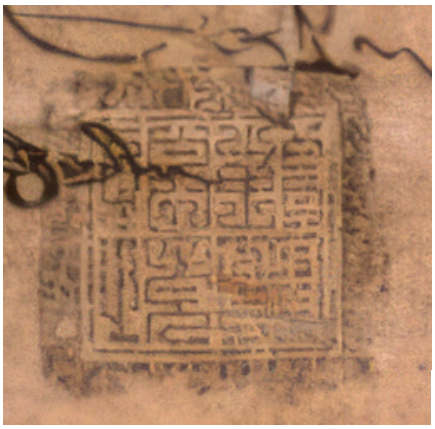




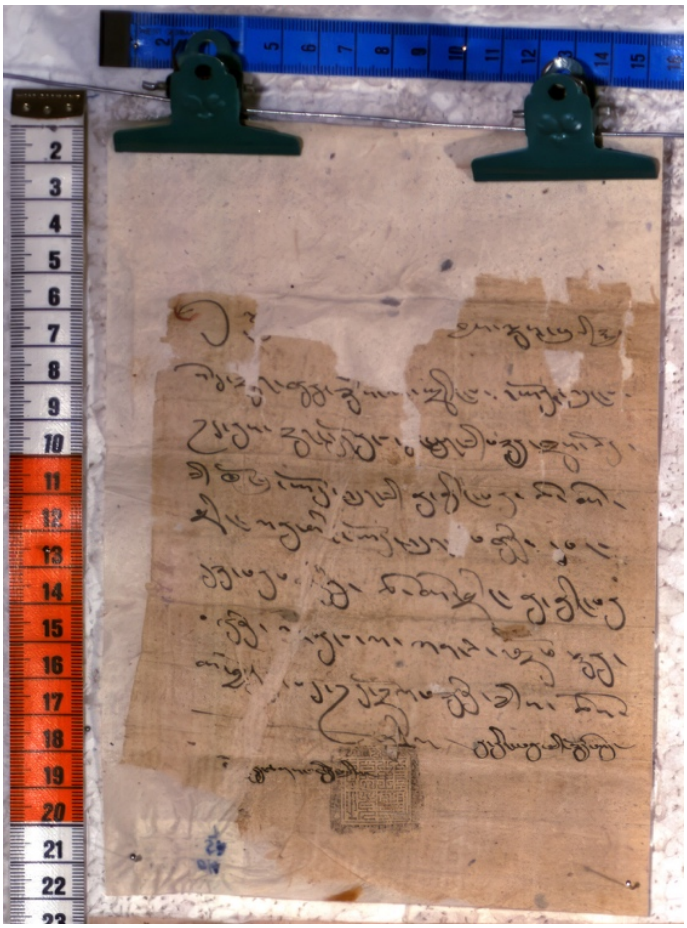


SEAL 4e

A badly damaged document in the database, which can no longer be dated, contains a seal impression which, on closer inspection, turns out to be another variant of SEAL 4.[32]

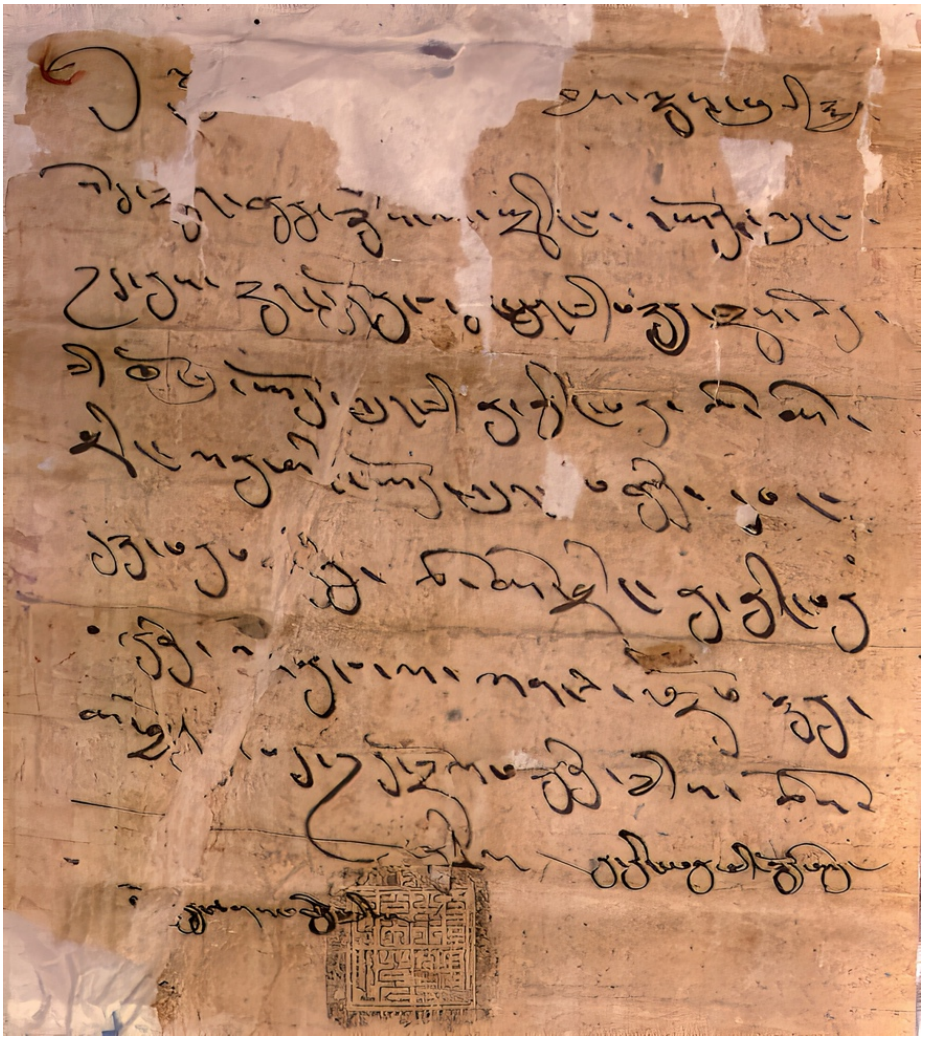


2.5 x 2.4 (1.8 x 1.8) cm



Here too, the *dbu can* letter *sa* appears in the middle of the top edge. What clearly differs from the impressions summarized under S4d is the writing style of the radical *tu* (土) of the last character.

[32] KDL: 012 2-1/#/52/7/4 (ID 1558).

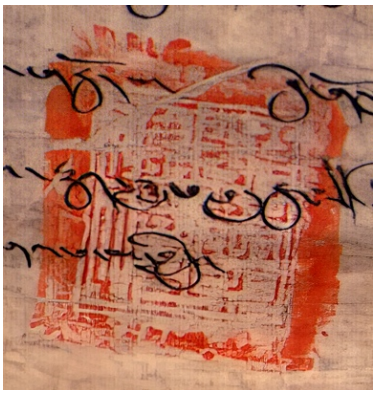


SEAL 4f

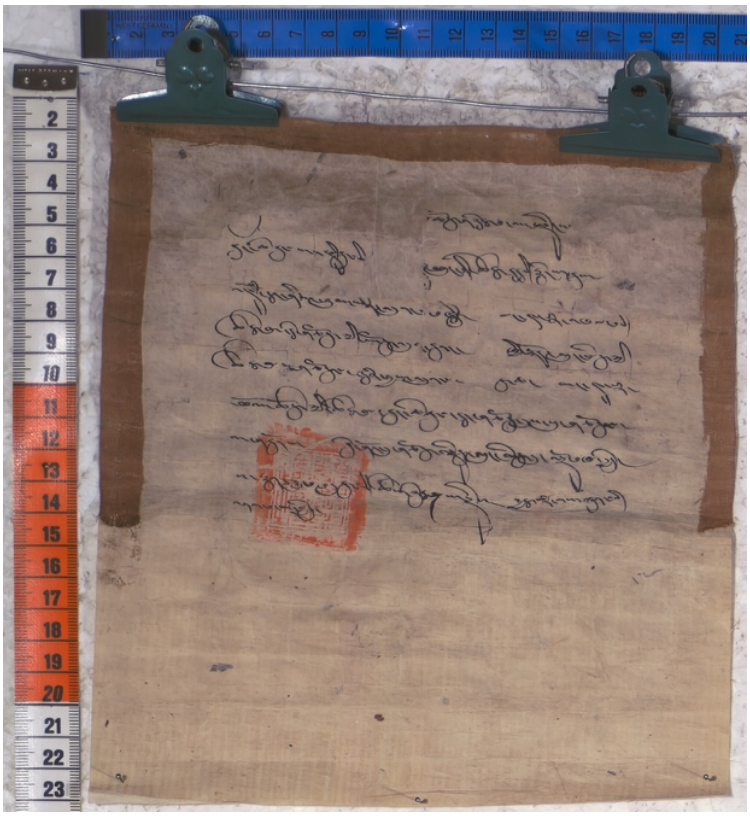
As mentioned above, Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei understand the seal with a side length of 2.3 cm (SEAL 4b) to be a replica of a larger seal that was still kept in the Potala at the time their book was written.[33] Together with its pearl bead button it has a height of 7 cm. Its seal-matrix has a side length of 3.5 cm.

[33] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 77. Note that all seal impressions reproduced by Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei are red in color, regardless of how they appear on historical documents.

Even if the dating suggested by the authors can be ruled out, the larger seal may nevertheless have served as a model for the smaller one. The database contains a document, which shows the poorly preserved red imprint of such a larger seal.[34] I cannot say whether the impression is actually from the same seal-die.



3.4 x 3.4 (2.5 x 2.5) cm

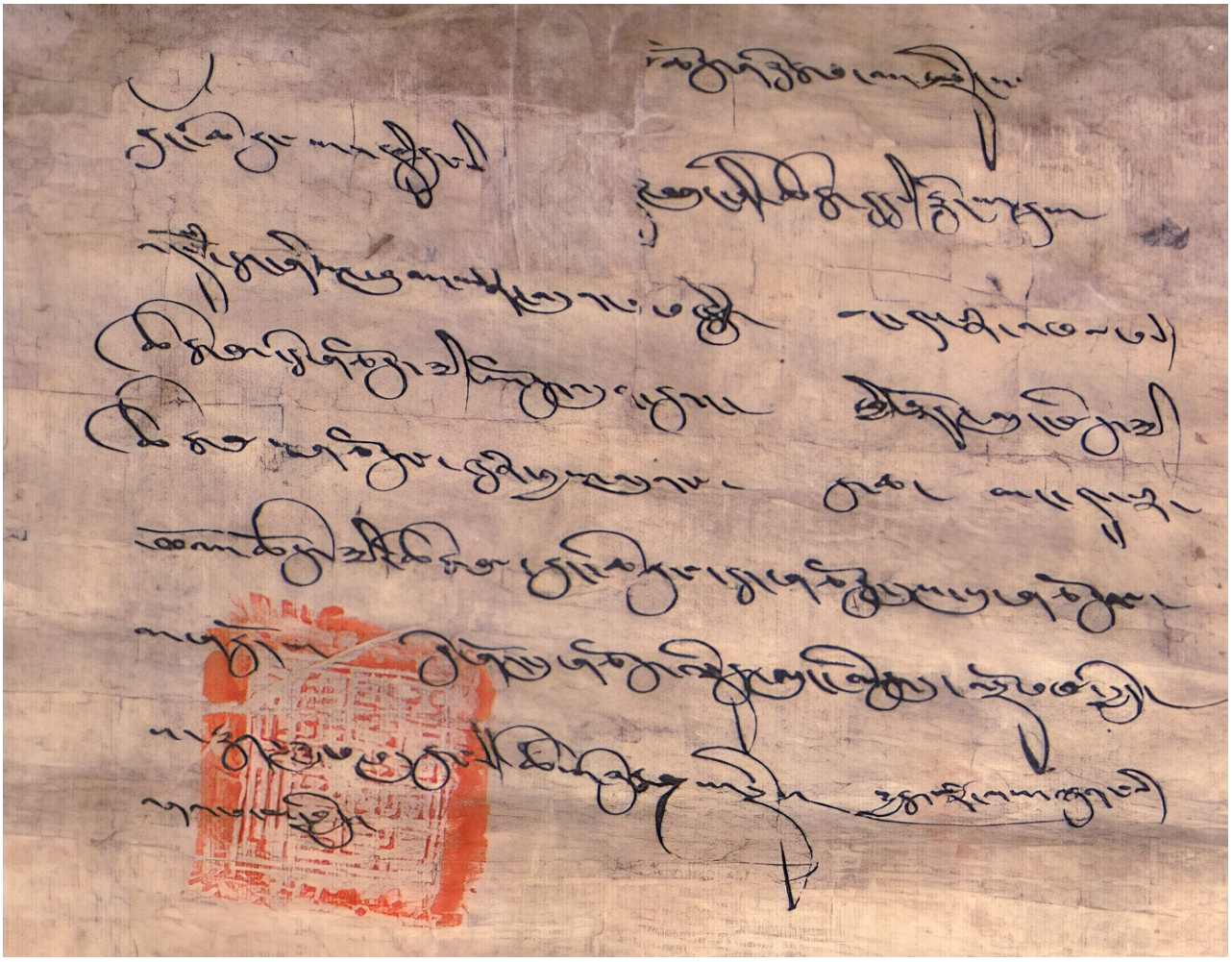


There is no letter in the upper edge of the seal impression in *dbu can* script.

The document is dated in an Earth Tiger year. On the one hand, the Archives of Tibet Autonomous Region assume that this corresponds to 1338. On the other hand, they name Ngag dbang grags pa as the issuer of the document. If he is identical with the last Phag mo gru pa ruler of the same name, the year in question, 1578, would not correspond exactly with the hitherto assumed reign of 1579 or 1580 to 1617.[35] However, the issuer's name is not given by the document itself. The question of the dating and authorship of the document cannot be decided for the time being. A date in the era of the Phag mo gru pa rule is likely.

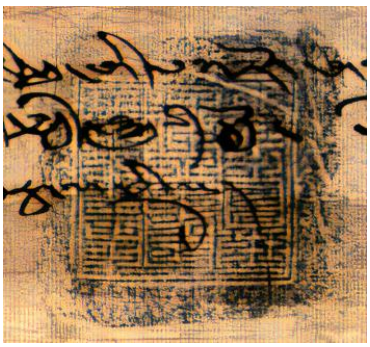
[34] ID 1049 (012 2-1/#/8/10/3) = k982.

[35] Bsod gnam rgya mtsho and Nor bu sgrol dkar 2000, 329.

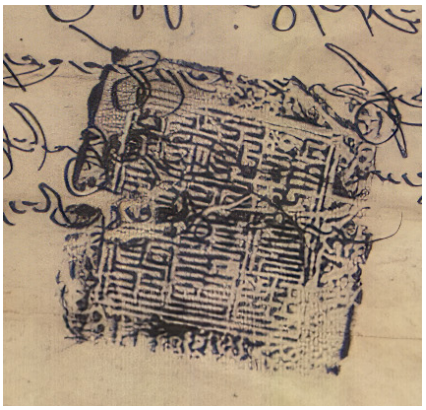


SEAL 5

The first document presented under SEAL 4d showed at the bottom a confirmation with the following seal impression:


3.6 x 3.5 (2.6 x 2.6) cm

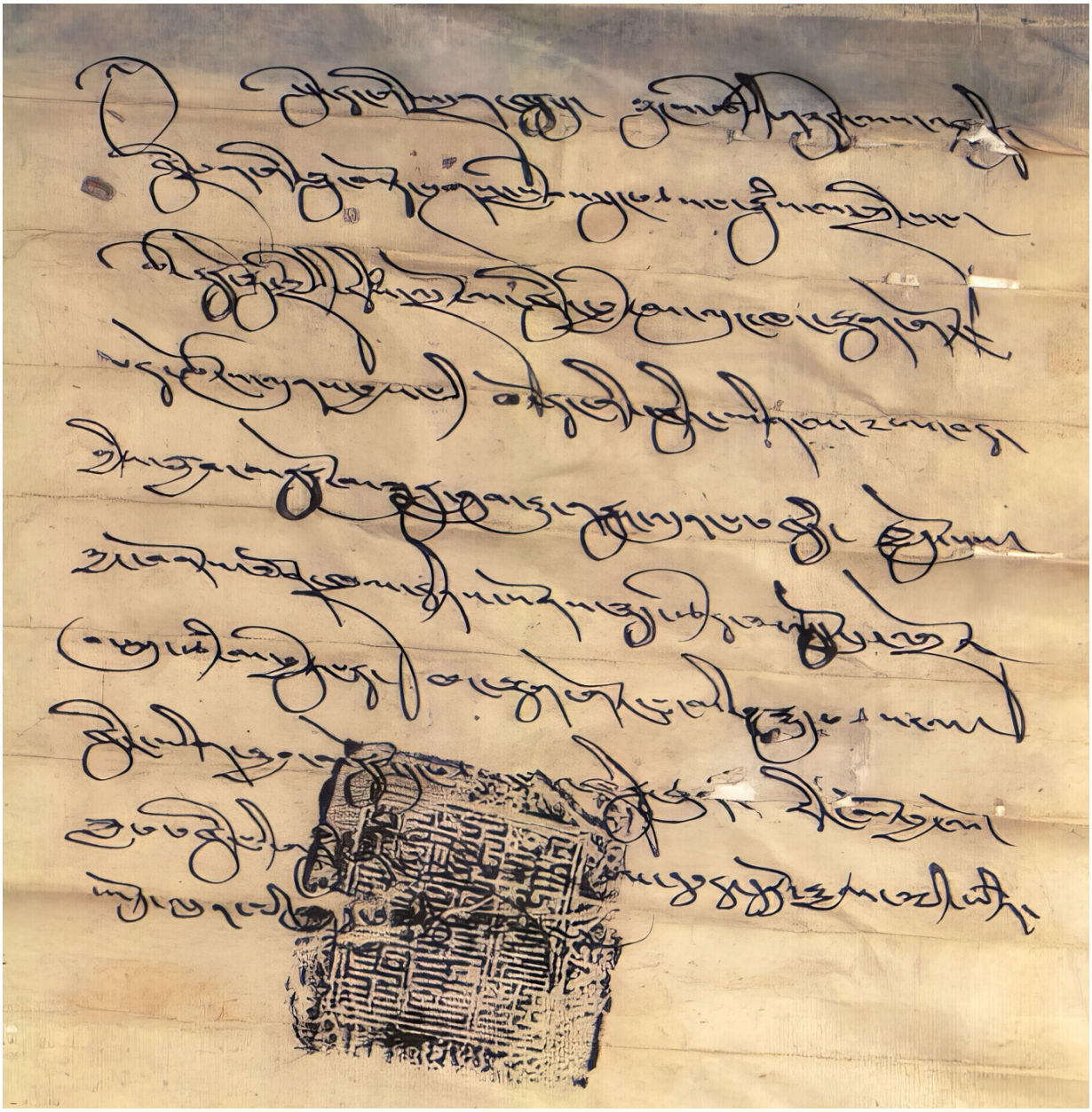
The same impression is shown at the bottom of a document issued in a Wood Bird year and dated by the Archives of Tibet Autonomous Region 1584 and attributed to gTsang pa *sde srid* Karma Phun tshogs rnam rgyal.[36]



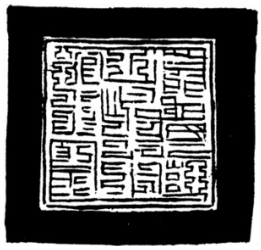
3.7 x 3.7 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

The handwriting and dating of the document correspond exactly to the second document presented under SEAL 4d. The wording is also in large part very similar. Only the seal impression is different on both documents. While the document presented first has a two-column seal, this one has a three-column seal. The fact that both documents are obviously of common origin suggests the sKyid shod *sde pa* as the issuer. Due to the poor quality of the impression, I was unable to decipher the inscription.

[36] KDL: 012 2-1/#/3/1/3 (ID 1001). For a transliteration and translation of the text see Schwieger 2023, 560-561.



Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the catalog included in the "Guide for the Blind" provides a rough tracing of the seal impression and attributes the seal to *sde srid* sTag rtse ba alias sKyid shod dGa' ldan *tha'i ji* lHa rgyal rab brtan, who shall have used it as *rgya tham* from the Fire Bird year (1717) up to the Iron Mouse year (1720), i.e. during his time as head of the Tibetan government during the Dsungar occupation:[37]



[37] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 53.

lHa rgyal rab brtan was the last in the succession of the Skyid shod *sde pa*. It can therefore not be ruled out that he used this seal during his term of office as head of government. So far, I am not aware of any documents that would prove this.

SEAL 6

Schuh presents a third seal impression in his catalog, which he assumes to be from a seal of the first regent bSod nams chos 'phel.[38]

He does not give any reasons for his assumption. For me, it is incomprehensible. The impression originates from a confirmation of a document issued by a king of Gung thang. It was published by Schuh in 1981.[39] There he dated the document itself to the 15th century. Regarding the confirmation at the end of the document, he neither identified the owner of the seal nor did he calculate the date of issue. Therefore, the reason for his later assumption is not clear.

A closer look reveals that the seal inscription is identical to the inscription *guanding guoshi chanhua wang yin* (灌顶國师阐化王印), meaning seal of *guanding guoshi* and *chanhua wang*. The title *guanding guoshi* can be translated as "Empowering National Preceptor". This title had been first granted to the Sa skya abbot *mkhas btsun* Nam mkha' legs pa'i rgyal mtshan (1305–1343, in office 1325–1341?) in 1325 by the Yuan emperor Yesun Temur (reign 1323–1328). After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the Ming emperors continued to confer this title on the Phag mo gru pa administrators. In 1406 the Yongle emperor (reign 1403-1424) confirmed this title together with the conferment of the additional title of *chanhua wang*, which could be translated as "prince who elucidates (the Buddhist teachings) and transforms (morally and spiritually)".[40]

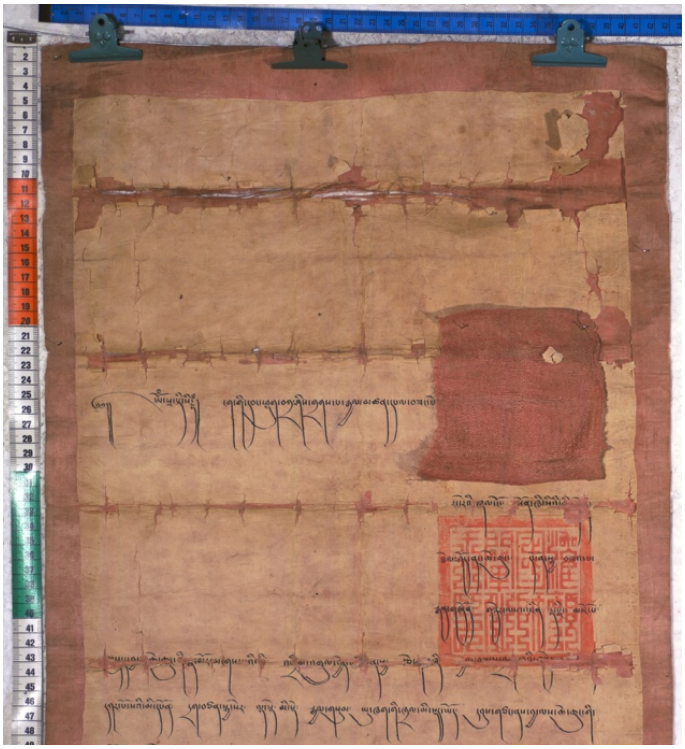
[38] Schuh 2018, 123–124.

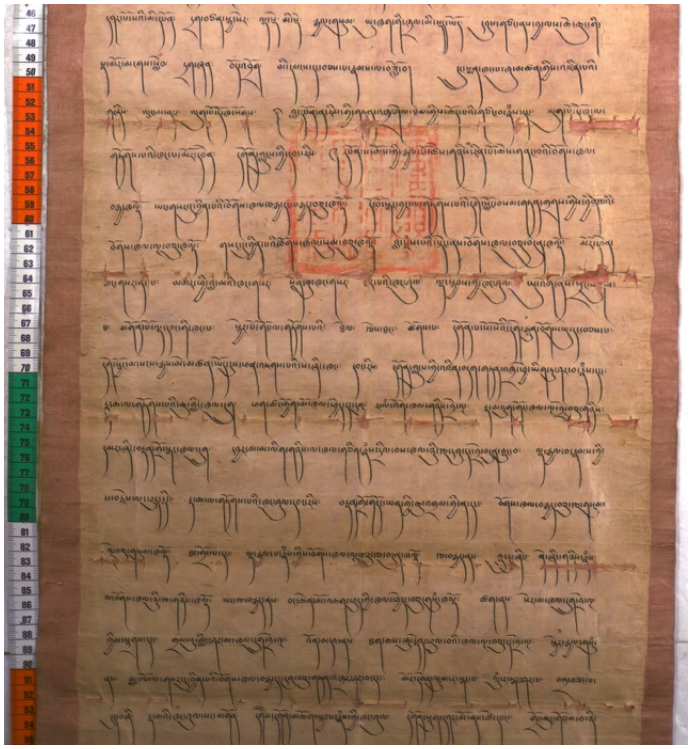
[39] Schuh 1981, 362.

[40] The title has been translated either as "prince who spreads magical transformations" (Sperling 1983: 158–159) or as "the king who spreads the teaching of good conduct" (Ṅag-dbaṅ Blo-bzaṅ rGya-mtsho 2008: 115, 227n1162) or as "prince who initiates transformation." (Slobodník 2013, 239n10). On the awarding of the title to Tibetan recipients see also Schwieger 2010, 315–317.

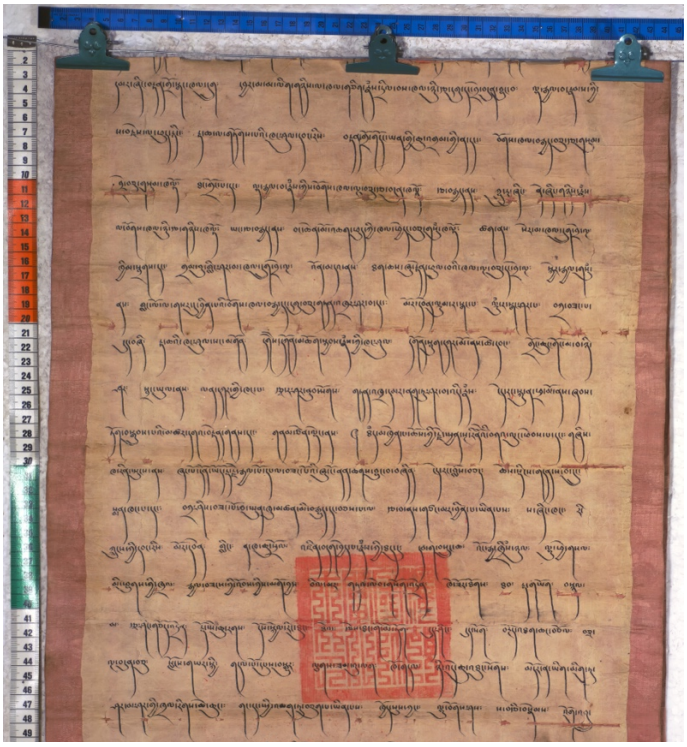
SEAL 7

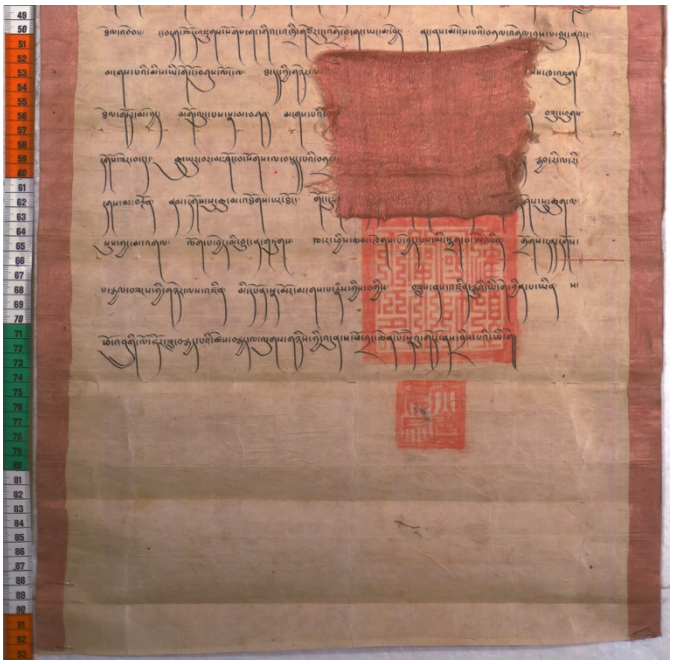
Our digital archives contain a document issued in 1508 by the ninth Phag mo gru ruler Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa (reign 1499-1564), which shows impressions of a seal that also combines the two titles *guanding guoshi* and *chanhua wang*.[41] The impressions measure 10.6 x 10.3 (8.7 x 8.6/8.7) cm.





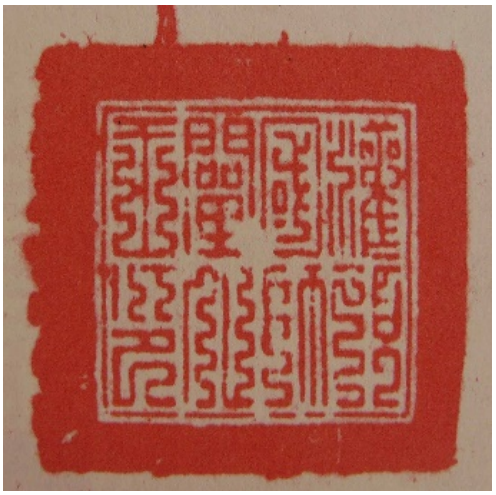
[41] KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/1/3 (ID 989).





For enlarged images of the document see appendix 1, pp. 267—270.

The Tibet Museum in Lhasa preserves an ivory seal with the same inscription for which various catalogs give a side length of the square stamp between 4.2 and 4.4 cm:[42]



Schuh specified the edge length for SEAL 6 as 2.6 x 2.5 (1.8 x 1.8) cm only. Obviously, the impression comes from yet another seal with the same inscription. As for the seal owner of that small seal and the date of confirmation, I can therefore only speculate.

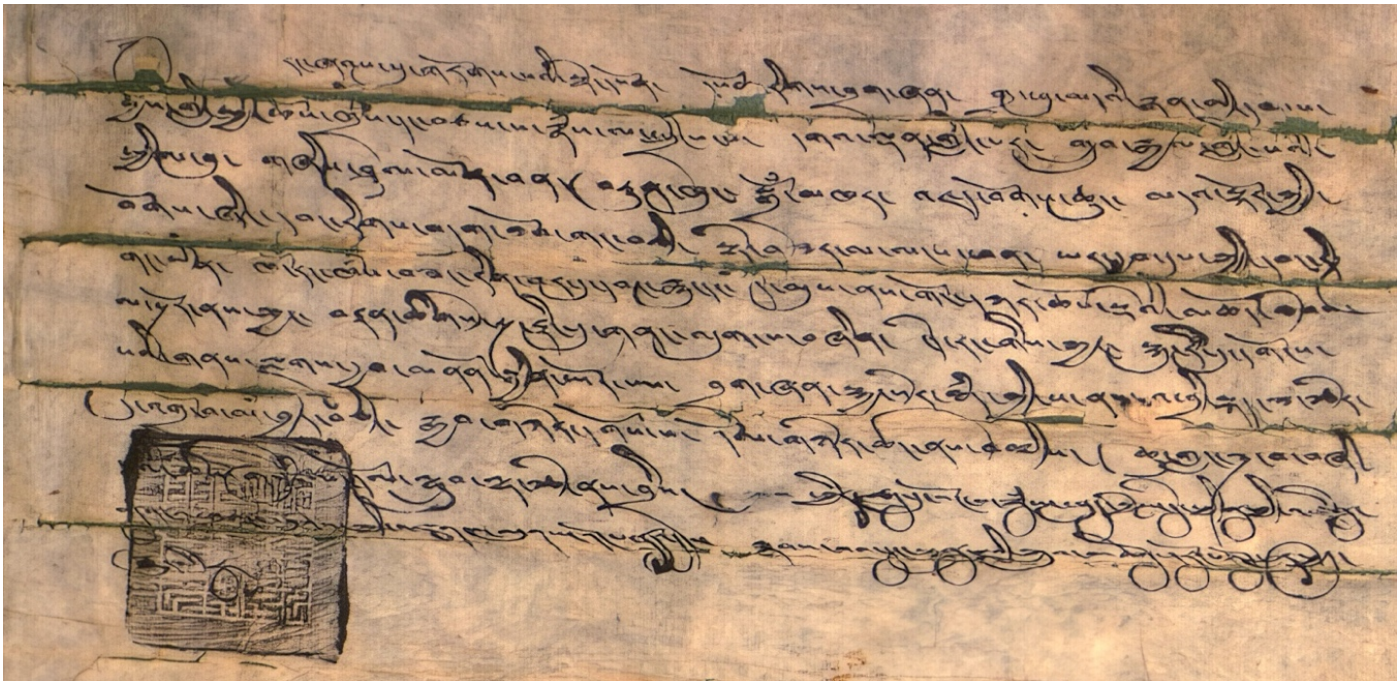
To better understand the structure of the individual characters, the text is added here once again in the small seal script.

[42] Tenzin Namgyal et al. 2001, 33; vJam-dbyangs, Wang Mingxing, et al. 2000, 93; Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 29.

SEAL 8

It may be of interest that the first title discussed here seems to appear once again on a black seal impression stamped on a document, which according to the Archives of Tibet Autonomous Region was issued in 1613 (*chu glang*) by *sde srid* gTsang pa Phun tshogs rnam rgyal.[43]

3.1 x 3.1 (2.2 x 2.2) cm



[43] KDL: 012 2-1/#/7/4/3 (ID 1032).

Although difficult to read, the three columns in the nine-folded script most likely show the words *guanding guoshi zhi yin* (灌顶國师之印). At least four seals with the same inscription were preserved in Lhasa in the Norbulingka and the Potala.[44]

SEAL 9

Finally, it should be mentioned that there existed yet another variant of the seal. Its stamp was engraved with the two titles *guoshi* and *chanhua wang*.

The impression originates from a document issued in 1437 (*me sbrul*) and published as a small facsimile in 1997.[45] The date of issue falls into the reign period of the sixth Phag mo gru administrator Grags pa 'byung gnas (reign 1432-1445).[46]

SEAL 10

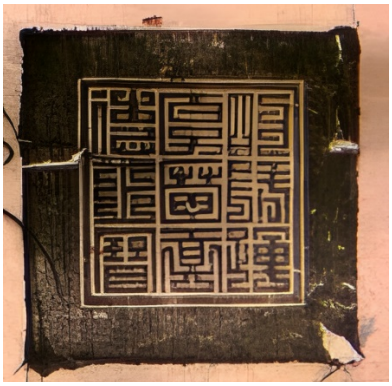
From the second Tibetan regent, 'Phrin las rgya mtsho, in office from 1660 to 1668, we have a seal impression with an inscription looking like the nine-folded script.[47]

[44] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 32–34.

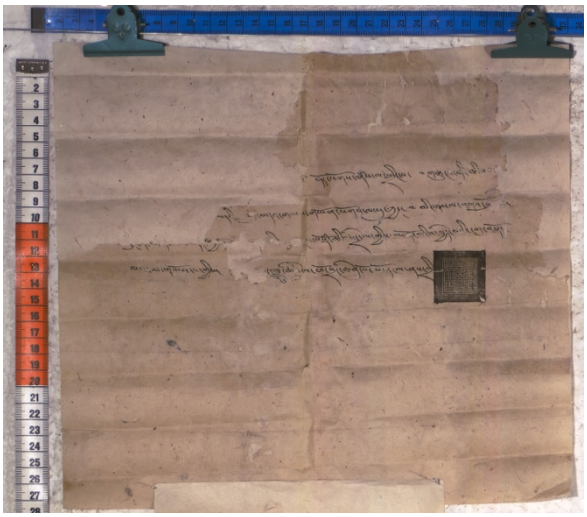
[45] Lu Liandi, Wang Yuping et al. 1997, plate 1, image 2.

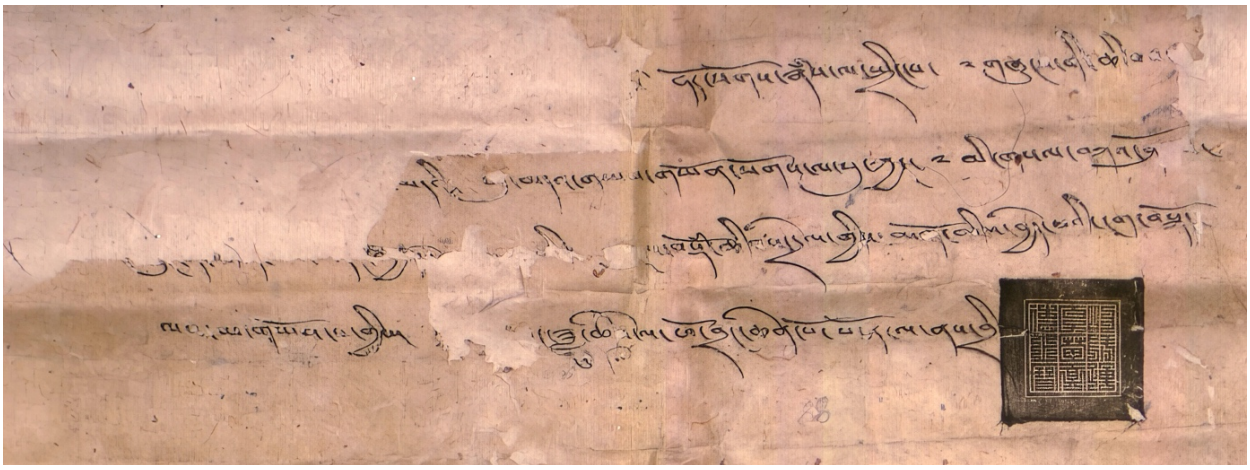
[46] Bsod nams grags pa 1971, 219, 221.

[47] KDL: 012 2-1/#/88/6/4 (ID 2046).



3.2 x 3.2 (2.2 x 2.2) cm





Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the catalog included in the "Guide for the Blind" provides an approximate drawing of the seal impression, which is in fact of no help.[48] Zhu Detao has identified the characters except the second and the fifth one. Accordingly, it says: *míng* □*yùn hòu* □*xiǎng dé zhī bǎo* (明□运厚□享德之宝).[49] However, when transforming the characters into the small seal script, which is the basis for the nine-folded script, I could hardly recognize more than an approximate similarity. It was not possible to reconstruct his reading in detail and conclusively. This can be demonstrated very well by the last character, which was read by Zhu Detao as *bao* (宝). A closer look reveals that it differs in three details from the *bao* character as it appears on other seal impressions with a nine-folded script:

versus

According to the *Shuowen Jiezi*, the *bao* character would be written as or .

However, the reading *bao* is problematic for another reason: this term always referred to seals used by the emperor or the empress dowager. Such a seal would never have come into the hands of a Tibetan

[48] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 43.

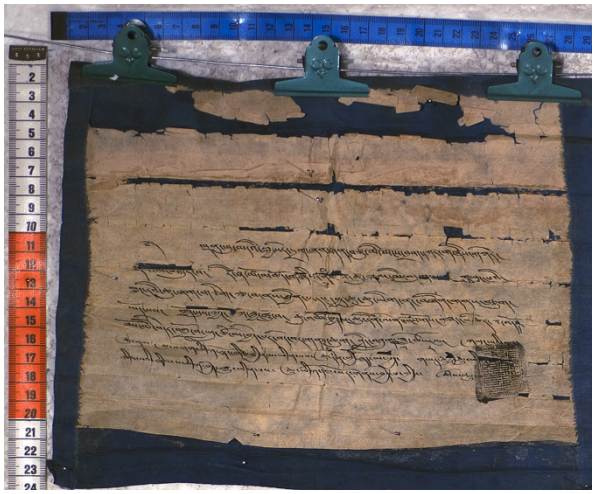
[49] Zhu Detao 2020b.

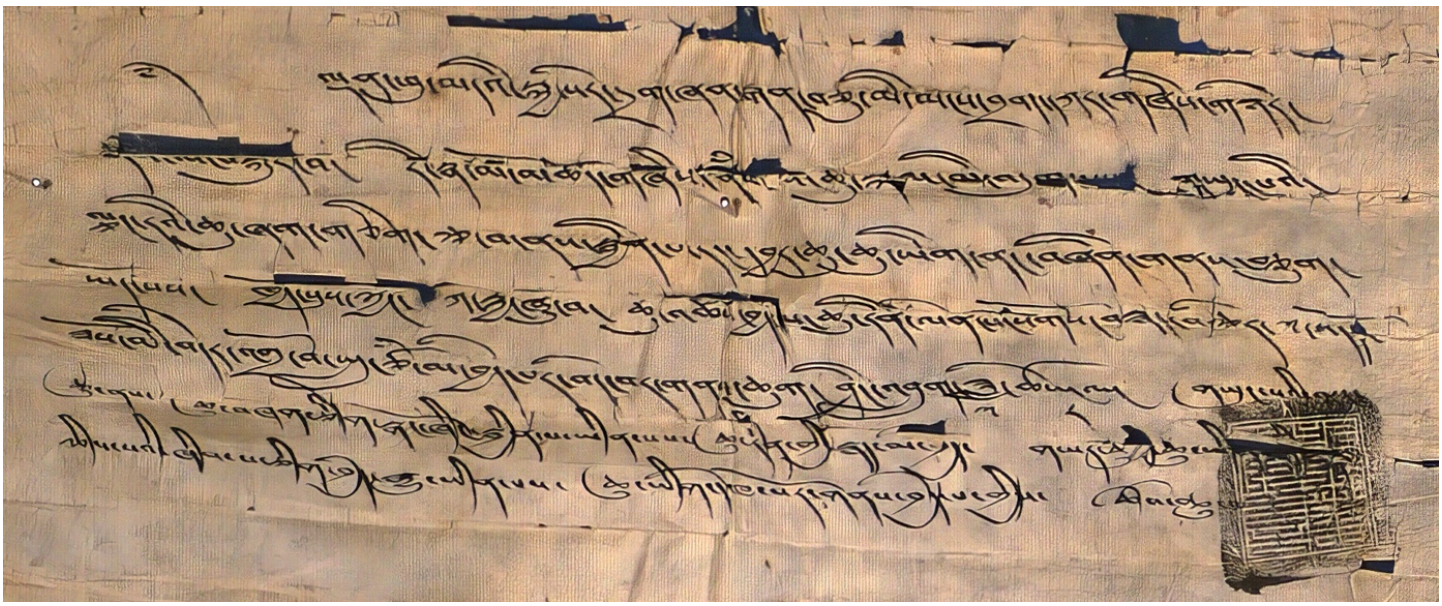
regent. I therefore suspect that the impression merely shows a pseudo-writing intended to convey the illusion that it is a seal originally granted by the emperor.

SEAL 11

There is an impression of another seal in the digital archives, which Schuh assumes belonged to the second regent 'Phrin las rgya mtsho.[50]

2.8 x 2.9 (2.2 x 2.3) cm

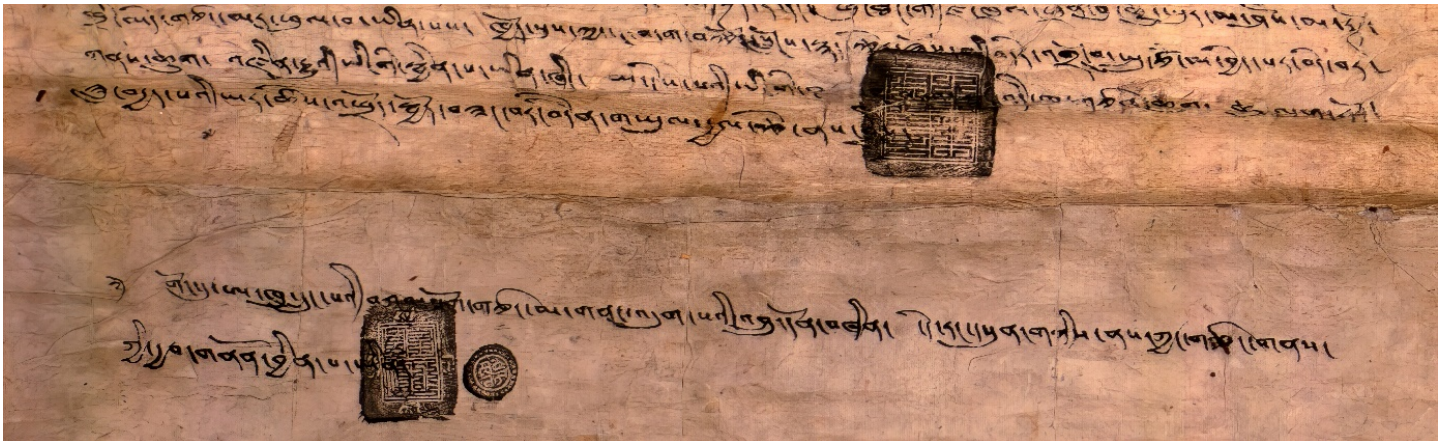




The text of the document provides no clue regarding the issuer or seal owner. The document was issued in 1664 (*shing 'brug*), which would indeed fall within the term of office of the second regent, which lasted from 1660 to 1668. However, I know three more documents showing impressions of this

[50] KDL: 012 2-1/#/61/5/4 (ID 1698).

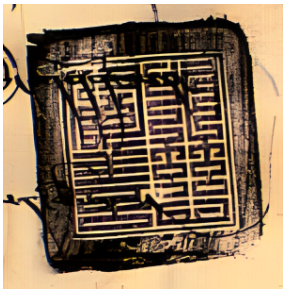
seal that were all issued prior to the second regent's term of office: in 1643, 1645 and 1649.[51] Moreover, a confirmation on one of the documents reveals the issuer as *a khu drung pa*:[52]



For the two seal impressions at the bottom of the document, see SEAL 12 and SEAL 13.

A khu drung pa was a common designation for the sKyid shod *sde pa*, also called sKyid shod *zhabs drung*, sKyid shod *zhal ngo* or *sde pa* dGa' ldan pa. As rulers of the sKyid shod area, they were among the early patrons of the dGe lugs pa. The *a khu drung pa*, who issued the documents at hand, must be *sde pa* Yid bzhin nor bu, son of *a khu drung pa* gYul rgyal nor bu (died 1607) and one of the younger brothers of sKyid shod *sde pa* A dpal alias bSod nams rgyal mtshan, who died during his exile in A mdo in 1636.[53] Another brother was the sKyid shod *sprul sku*.[54] Gushri Khan had given Yid bzhin nor bu back his power over sKyid shod after his victory over the gTsang pa *sde srid*.[55] This meant that the sKyid shod pa were allowed to continue issuing rulers' charters for their territory until almost the end of the seventeenth century.

To analyze the seal inscription, let us take the impression on the document from 1649.[56]


2.9 x 3.1 (2.2 x 2.3) cm

[51] KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/3/3 (ID 1042), KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/1/4 (ID 1902), KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/21/4 (ID 1922).

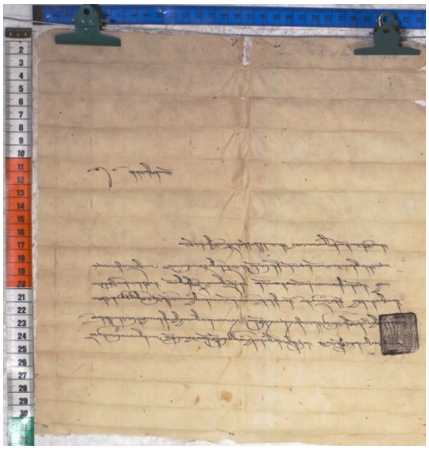
[52] KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/1/4 (ID 1902). For a larger excerpt of the document that was issued in 1643 see under SEAL 12.

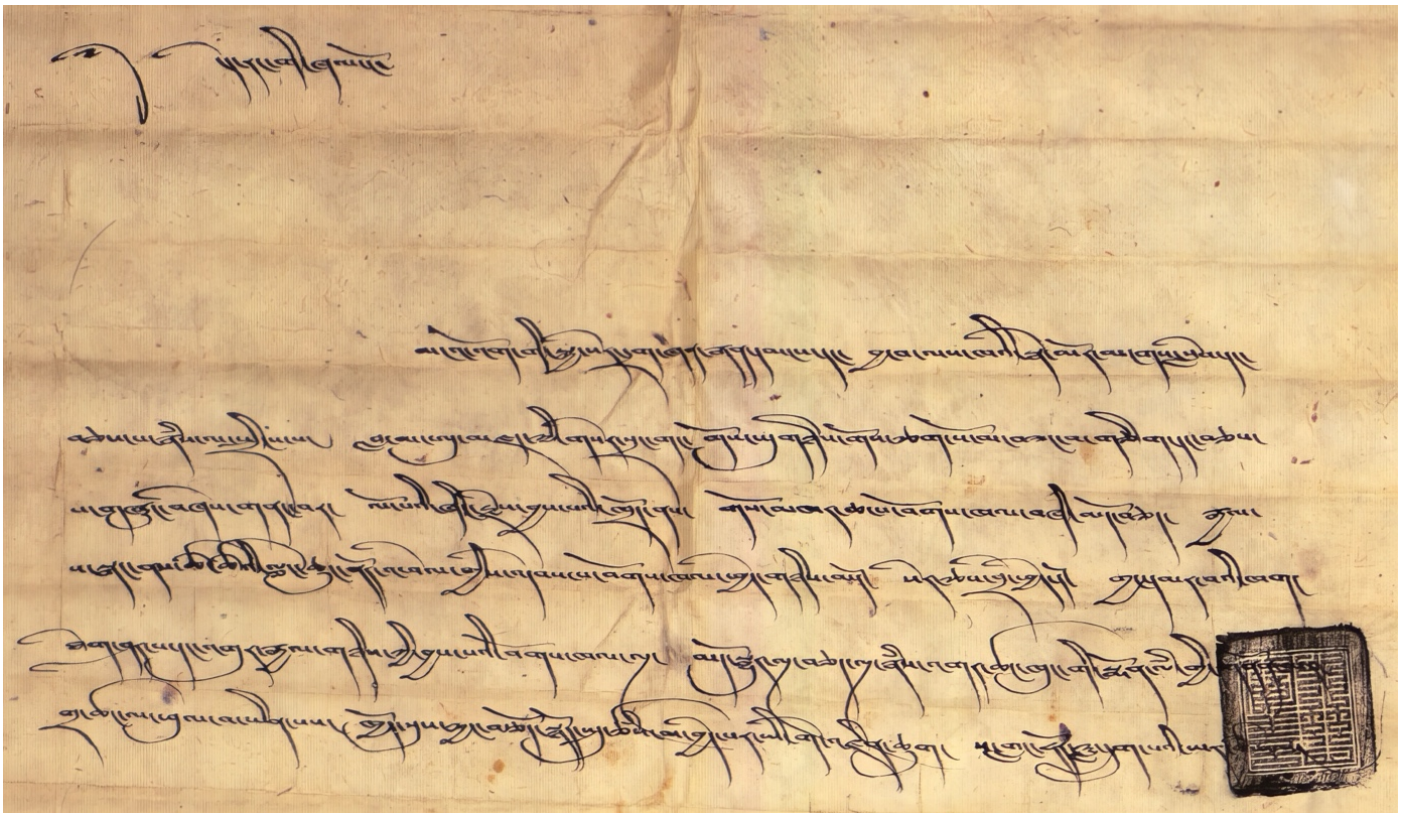
[53] Yönten Gyatso 2006, 20, 30.

[54] Yönten Gyatso 2006, 37–41.

[55] Yönten Gyatso 2006, 31.

[56] KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/3/3 (ID 1042). The Tibetan Archives in Lhasa dates the document to 1589. The text itself says *sa glang hor zla drug pa'i yar tshes*, "first part of the sixths month of the Earth-Ox year."





The impression clearly shows an inscription in the nine-folded Chinese seal script. Even if the reading of the sign at the top left is uncertain, I am fairly certain that the inscription is to be read *hongci guangshan* (弘慈廣善), meaning "benevolence promotion and extensive kindness." Converted into the small Chinese seal script it would look like this:

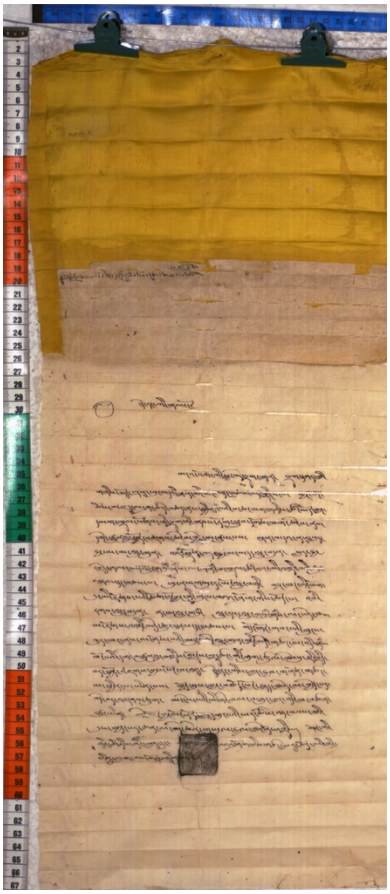
The inscription can possibly be explained as an echo of a Ming title which, according to the *Ming shilu* (明實錄), was awarded to a Tibetan recipient named bSod nams bzang po in 1436 and later inherited by his nephew in 1472. The full title was *Hongci guangshan guoshi* (弘慈廣善國師), "National Preceptor of Benevolence Promotion and Extensive Kindness."[57] Thus, it seems that an older seal inscription was reused by the sKyid shod *sde pa*, whereby the decisive imperial title was omitted. It is

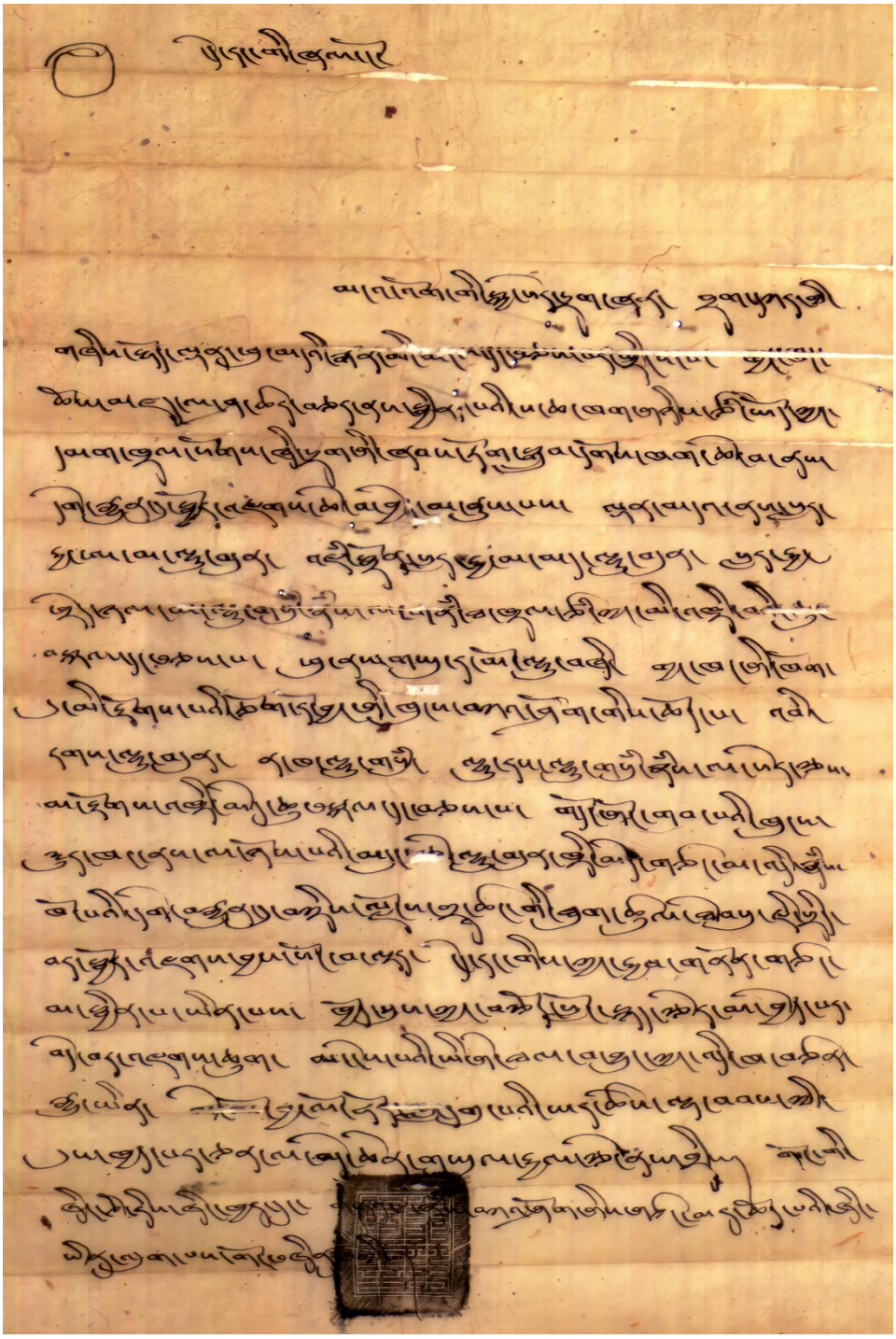
[57] Hu 2023, 372.

quite possible that the sKyid shod *sde pa* had taken the seal inscription from a seal of one of the successive *sde pa* sNel pa or sNe'u pa, who ruled over sKyid shod before it was seized by the Rin spungs pa.[58] One of them was bSod nams bzang po, who might be identical with the person of this name mentioned in the *Ming shilu* as the recipient of the title *Hongci guangshan guoshi*.

A document issued in 1645 (*me bya*) shows another impression of the same seal.[59]

3.0 x 3.2 (2.3 x 2.4) cm





[58] Yönten Gyatso 2006, 2.

[59] KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/21/4 (ID 1922).

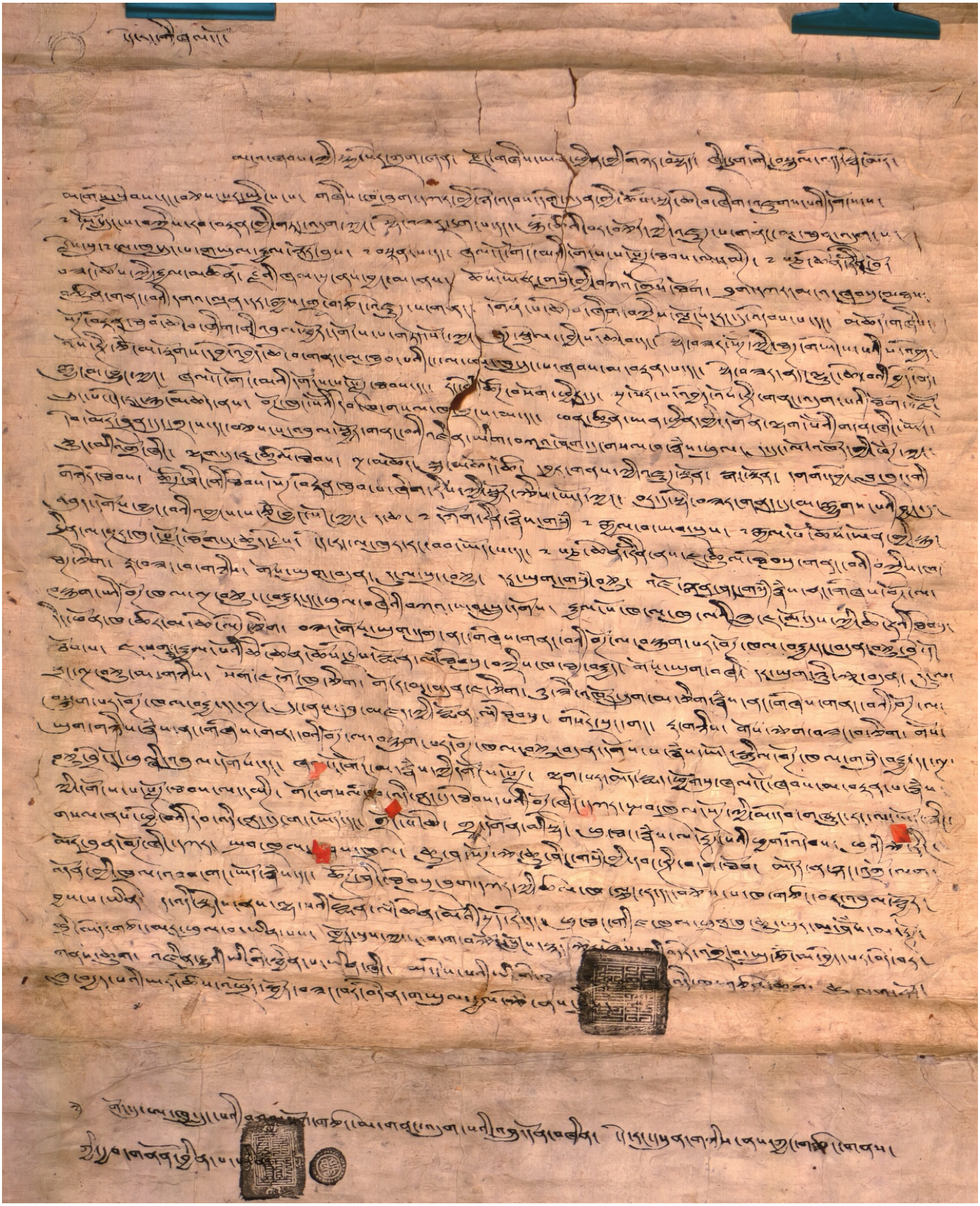
SEAL 12 and SEAL 13

In this context, I would like to draw your attention briefly to the two seal impressions at the end of the undated confirmation note on the document from 1643.[60]

The rectangular impression of SEAL 12 measures 2.1 x 2.7 (1.5 x 1.8) cm. The round impression of SEAL 13 has a diameter of 1.3 cm.

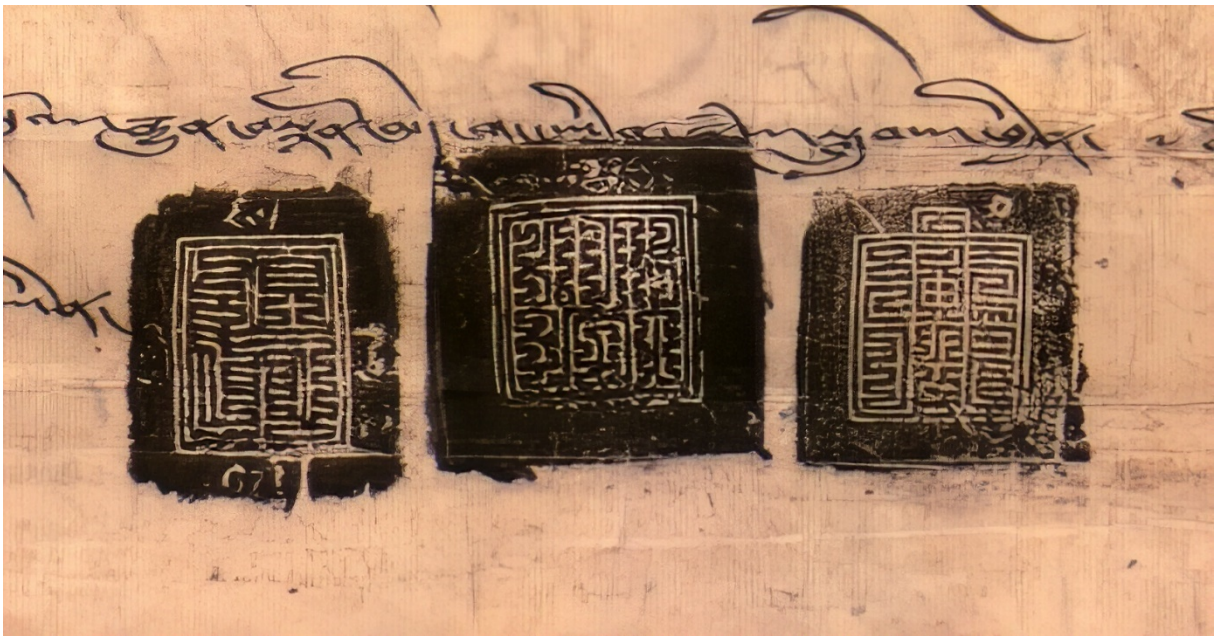
The issuers and seal holders of the confirmation note refer to themselves simply as "we two siblings" (*dpun* has to be corrected to *spun*).

[60] KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/1/4 (ID 1902). The image shows the lower part of the document.

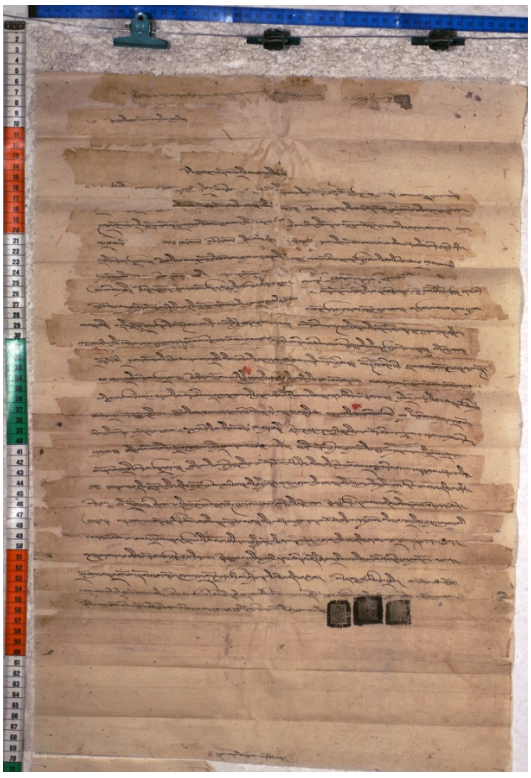


SEAL 12, SEAL 14 and SEAL 15

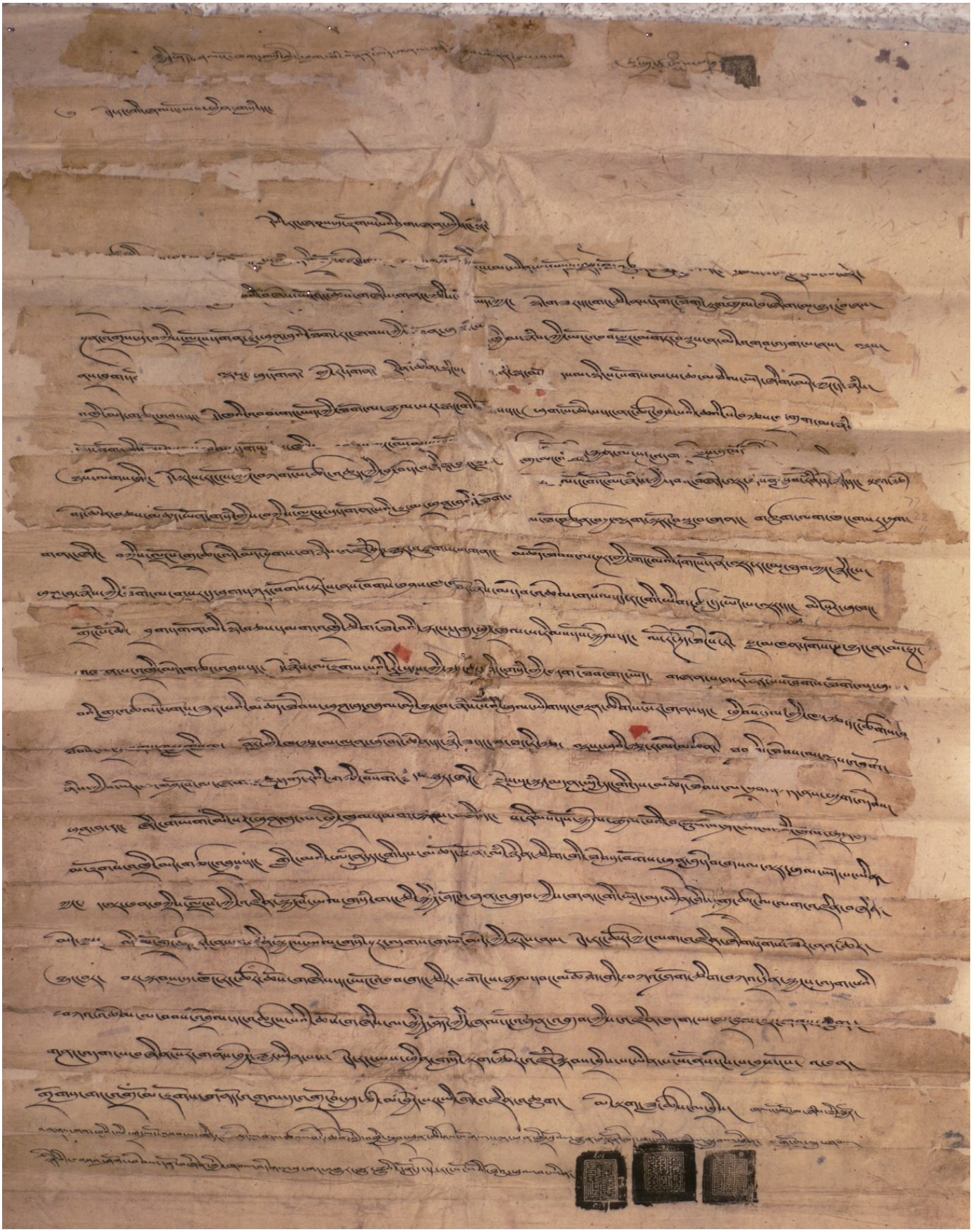
The impression of SEAL 12 is identical with another one found on a document issued in 1686.[61] It appears here on the left-hand side.



The impression of SEAL 12 on the left measures 2.2 x 2.6 (1.5 x 1.8) cm. The impression of SEAL 14 in the middle measures 2.8 x 2.8 (1.7 x 1.7) cm. The impression of SEAL 15 on the right measures 2.3 x 2.3 (1.5 x 1.5) cm.



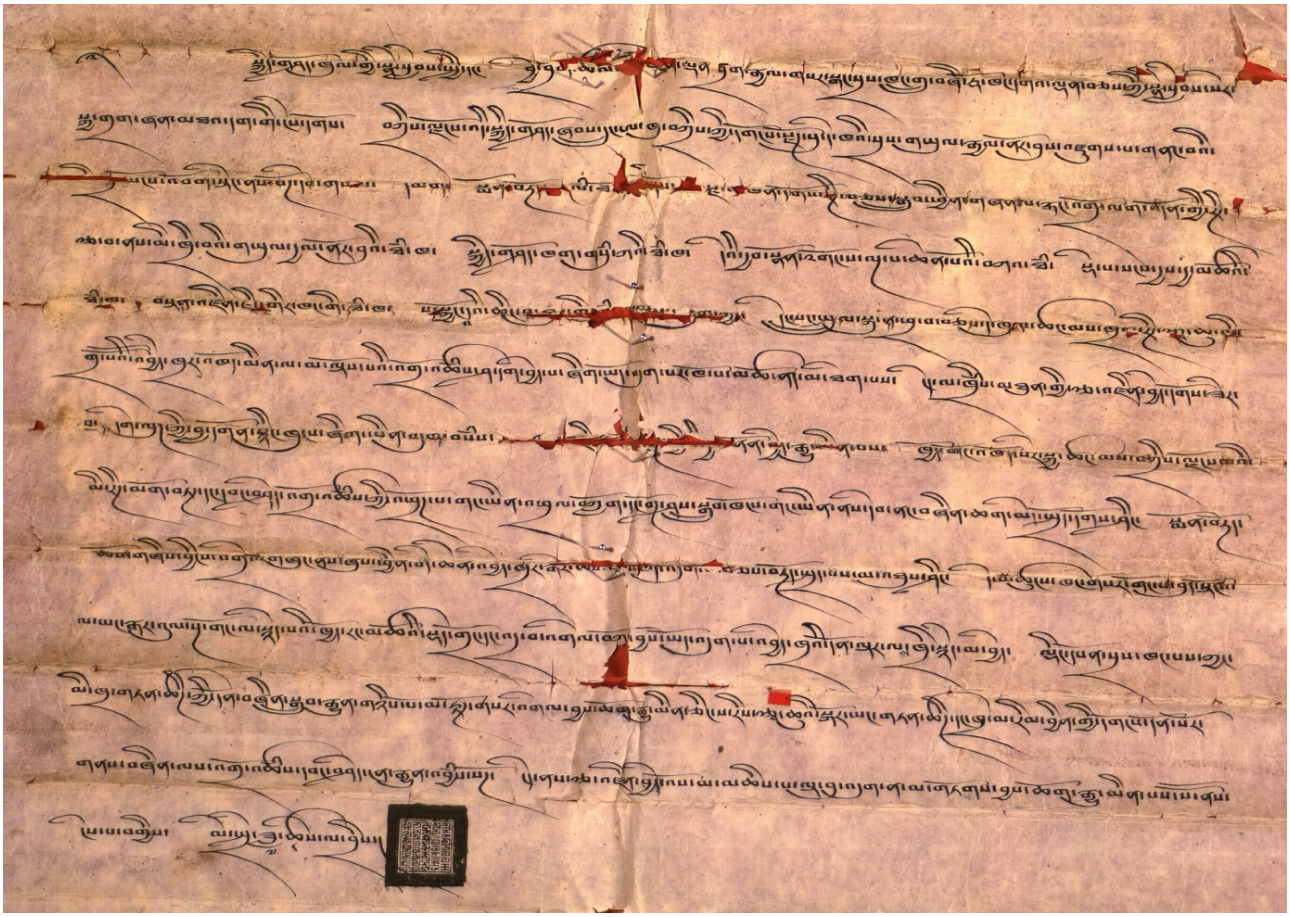
[61] KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/22/4 (ID 1923).



Although not by name, the identity of the owners of the seals is clear from Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's reply at the top of the document:

skyid shod zhal ngo khag gsum gyi phyag tham bsnyon med gnas bzhi[n] rgyab gnon byas pa y<i>n/ chu spre zla 2 tshes 28 la bris/
"The seals of the three sKyid shod *zhal ngo* are genuine. Accordingly, I have given the confirmation. Written on the 28th day of the 2nd month of the Water-Ape (year, April 14, 1692)."

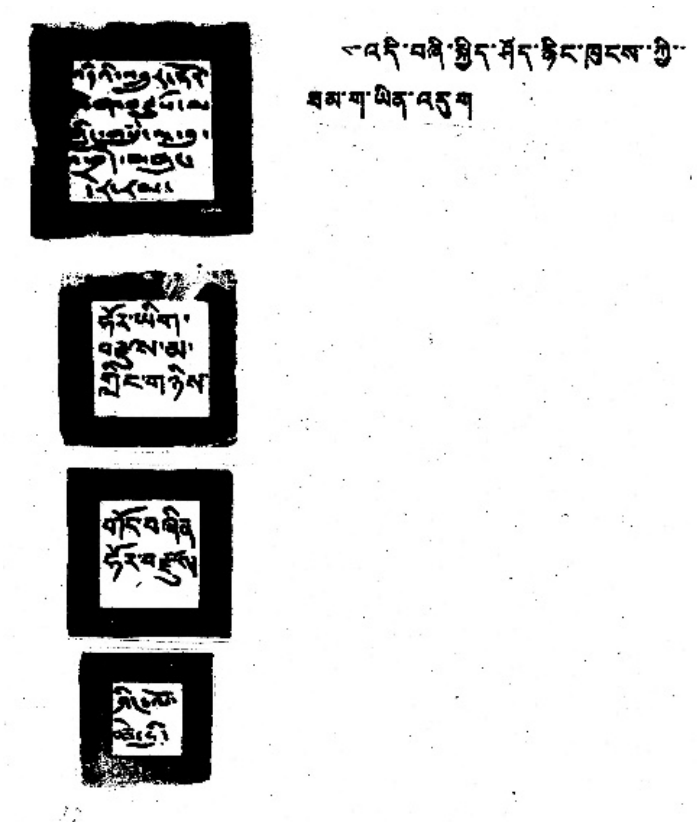
The seal impression of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, placed at the end of the *'go mchan*, I will discuss further below (SEAL 38). In the present context, I would like to briefly explain who the three sKyid shod *zhal ngo* were who are repeatedly mentioned in the same breath. Pho lha nas still speaks of them merely as a tightly knit group, as the *skyid shod khag gsum*:[62]



[62] KDL: 012 2-1/#/60/3/4 (ID 1681). For a brief discussion of the problematic dating of the document see Schwieger 2013, 91–92.

The three sKyid shod *zhal ngo* should be identical with the three sons of sKyid shod *sde pa* A dpal alias bSod nams rgyal mtshan: mGon po rab brtan, rDo rje rnam rgyal and mTsho skyes rdo rje. They must have inherited their power from bSod nams rgyal mtshan's younger brother Yid bzhin nor bu after the latter's death. All three are mentioned repeatedly in the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The most powerful one among them was apparently rDo rje rnam rgyal, also known as *sa skyong* dGa' ldan pa *zhabs drung* rDo rje rnam rgyal. His brother mTsho skyes rdo rje was the governor of sTag rtse fortress. The sKyid shod pa's power and influence ended finally in 1720 with the execution of rDo rje rnam rgyal's son, sTag rtse lHa rgyal rab brtan, head of the Tibetan government under the Dsungars, by the Manchus.[63]

The appendix of the *Long ba'i dmig bu* mentions four seals from sKyid shod whose origin is old.[64] The accompanying illustrations in Chab spel and Ma grong's version do not show the seal impressions themselves but only black square borders of different sizes framing handwritten explanations. The three larger ones provide the information that the inscriptions would be *hor yig brdzus ma*, pseudo-Mongolian lettering.[65]



If, as I assume, the explanations refer to the impressions reproduced here, it must be concluded that the author of these explanations was no longer able to distinguish between imitations of the nine-folded Chinese seal script and imitations of the *hor yig*. In my view, an imitation of the *hor yig* can only be recognized on the third impression placed on the right side (SEAL 15). Typical for the *hor yig brdzus*

[63] Yönten Gyatso 2006, 36–37.

[64] *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 32v.

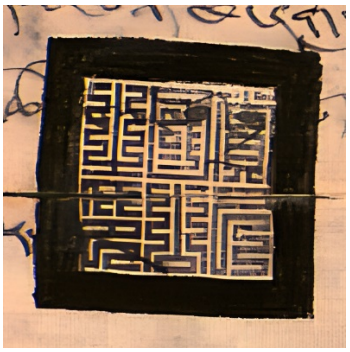
[65] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 72.

ma seems to be the inclusion of real, eye-catching 'Phags pa letters that reinforces the illusion that the inscription conveys a meaning. This, however, is discussed in more detail below in another context.

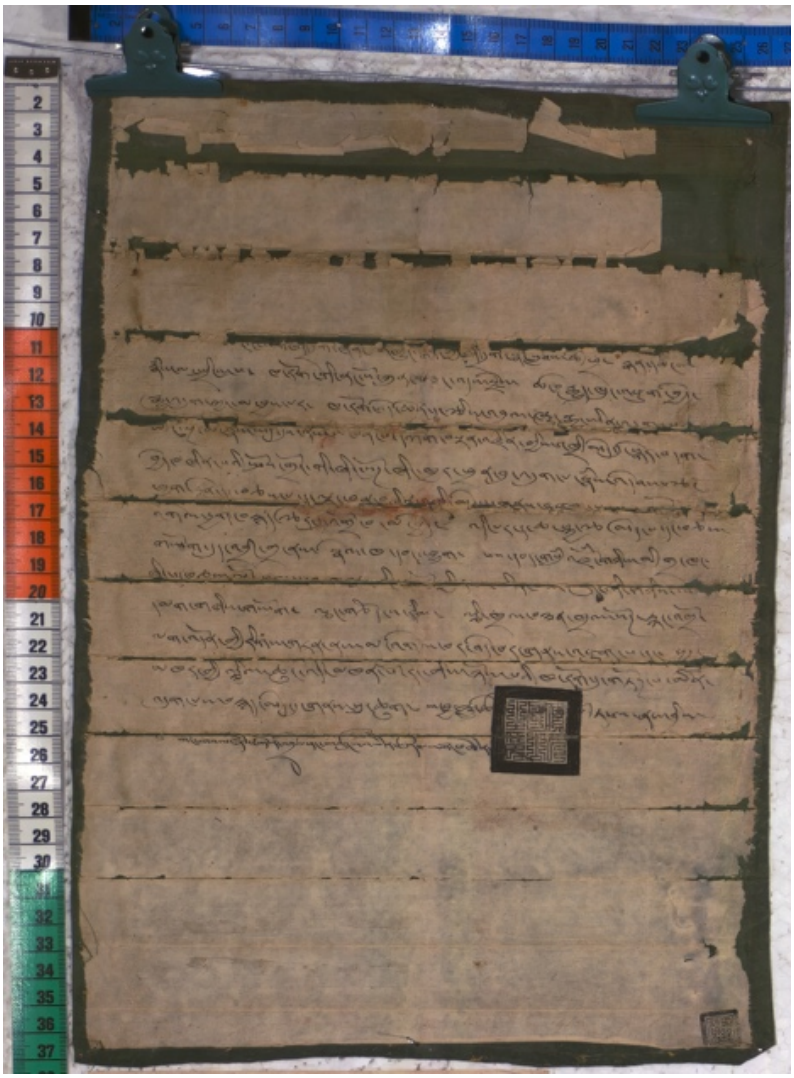
SEAL 16

From the third regent, Blo bzang mthu stobs, who reigned from 1669 to 1674, we have four seal impressions, which show the same inscription in the nine-folded script.

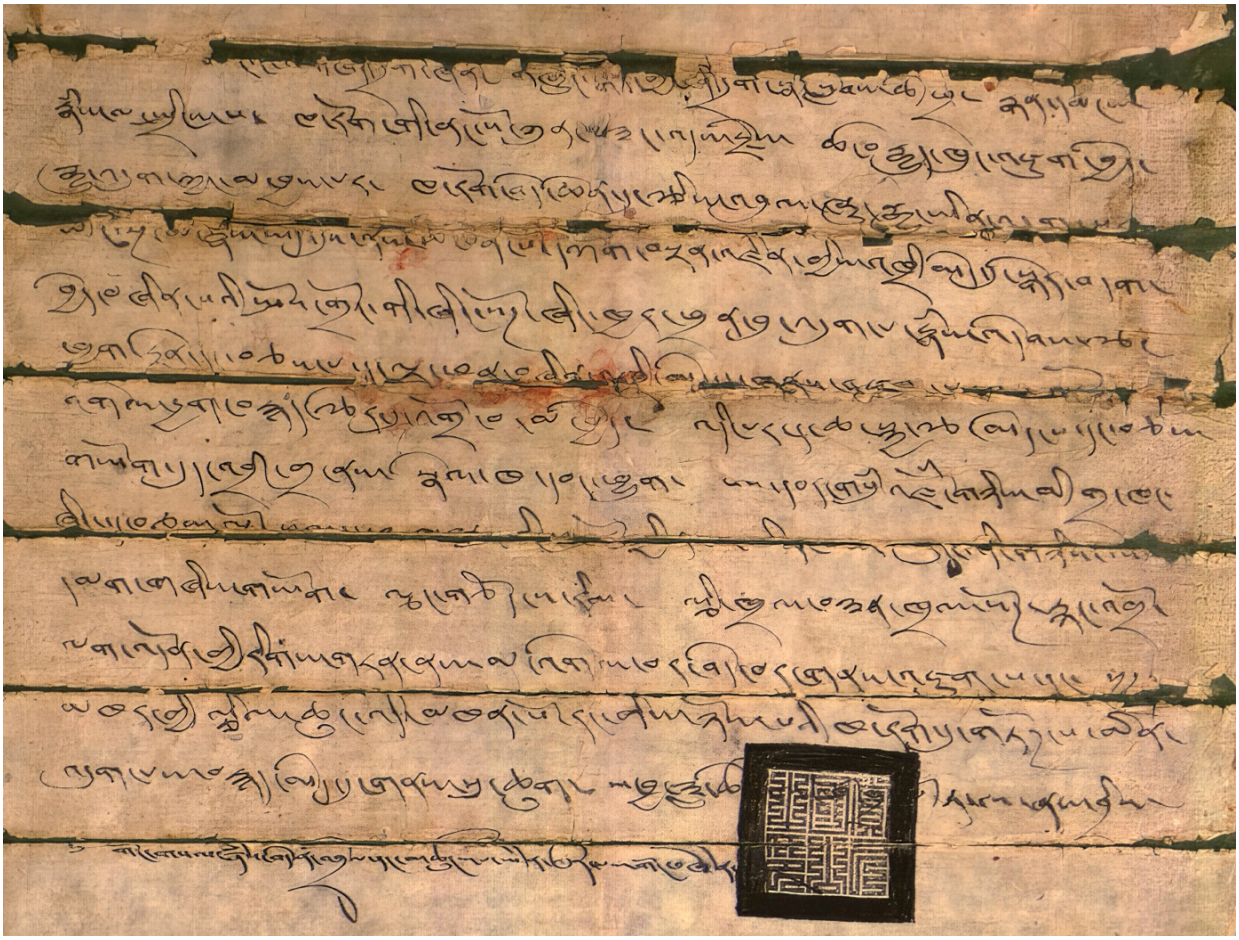
The first one is from 1669 (*sa bya*).[66]



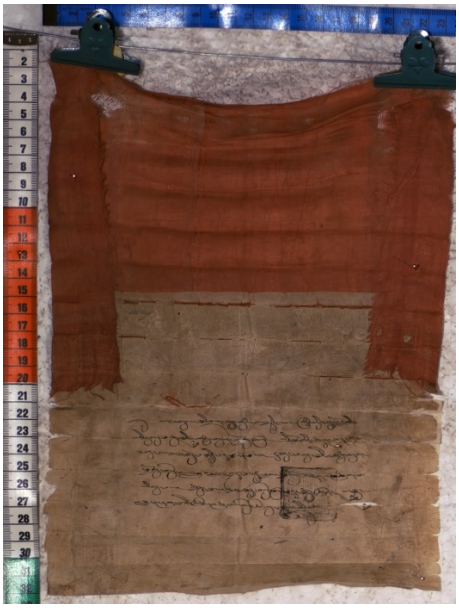
3.2 x 3.2 (2.3 x 2.3) cm



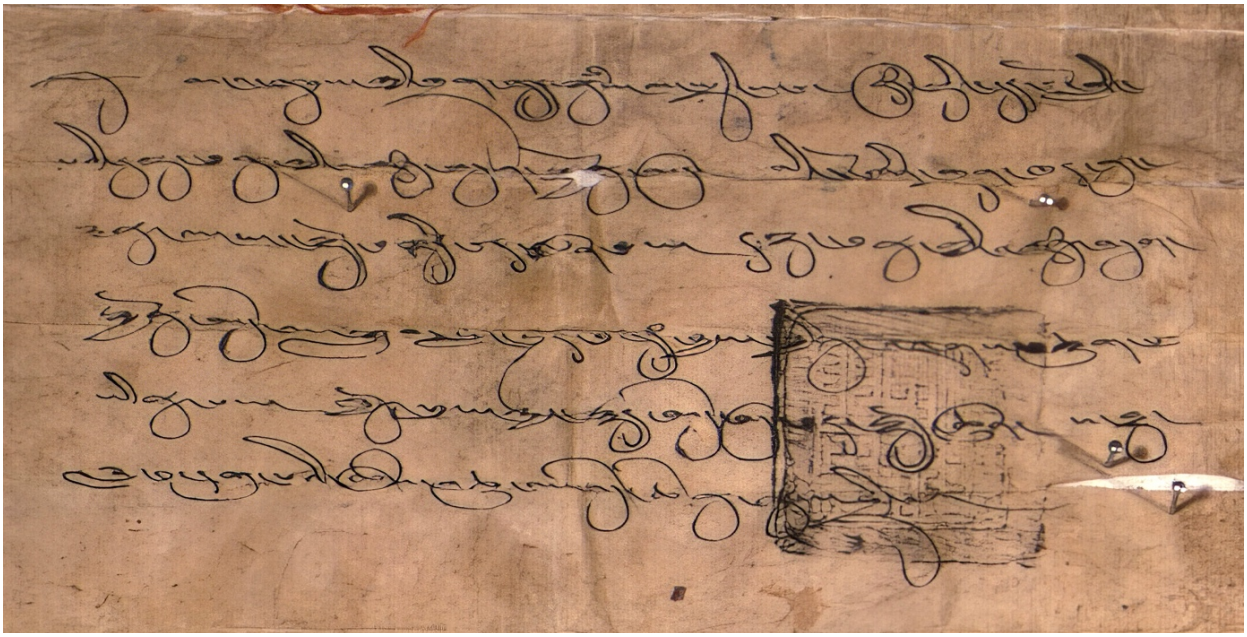
[66] KDL: 012 2-1/#/38/2/4 (ID 1406).



The second document is also dated 1669 (*sa bya*).[67]



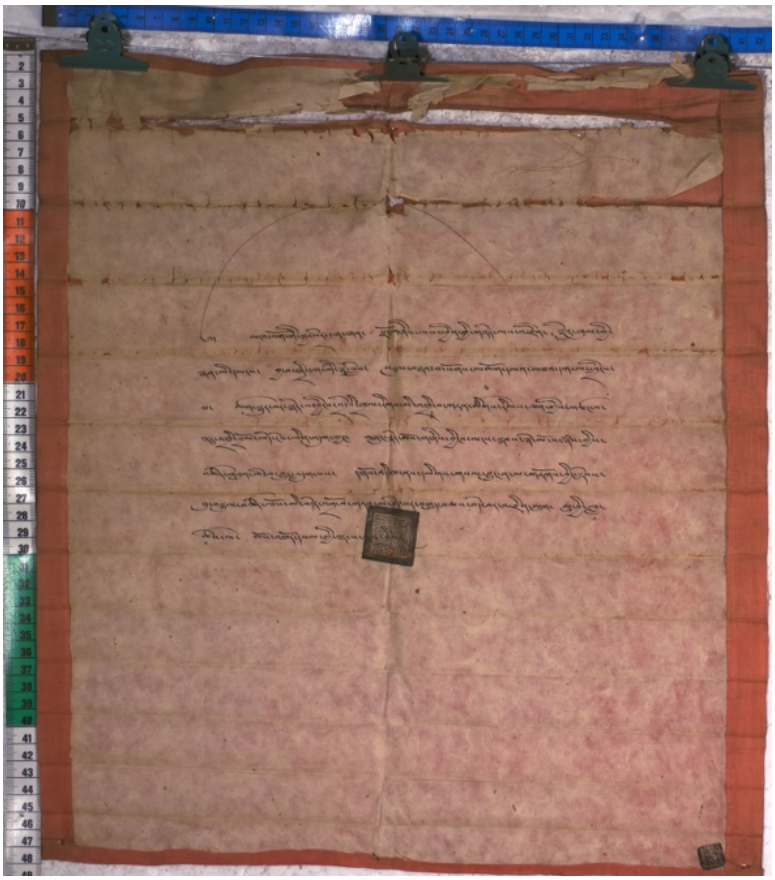
[67] KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/15/3 k1795 (ID 1916). The Tibetan Archives read instead of *sa bya* the year *sa rta*, which would correspond to 1678, a date outside the office period of Blo bzang mthu stobs. If you zoom into the text, however, you can recognize the reading *sa bya*.



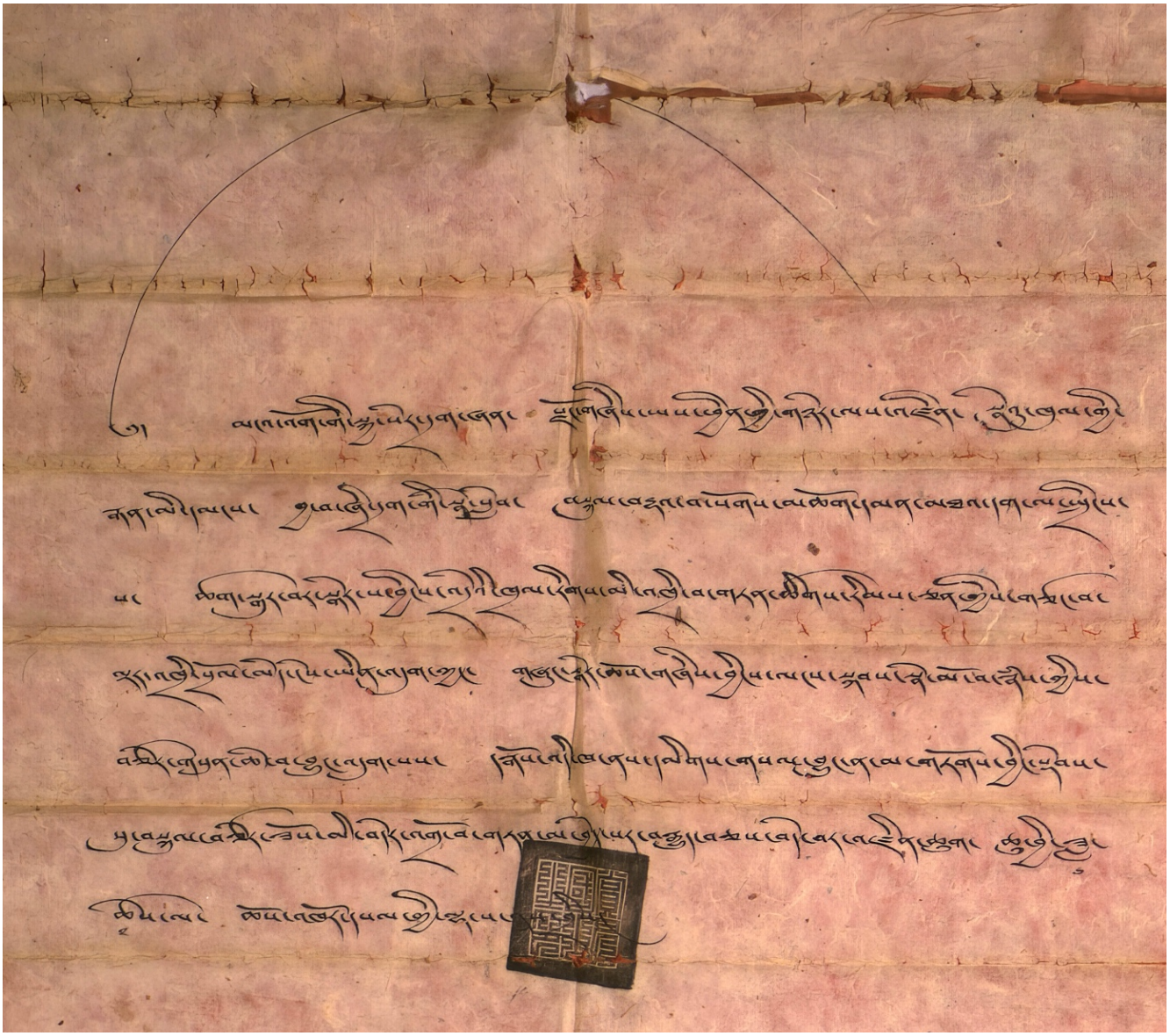
The seal impression measures 3.2 x 3.0 (2.3 x 2.3) cm.

The third document was issued in 1672 (*chu byi*).[68]

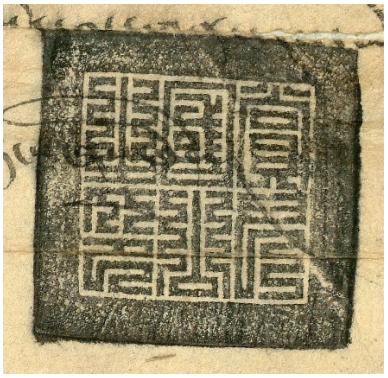
3.0 x 3.2 (2.2 x 2.4) cm



[68] KDL: 012 2-1/#/53/21/4 (ID 1582).

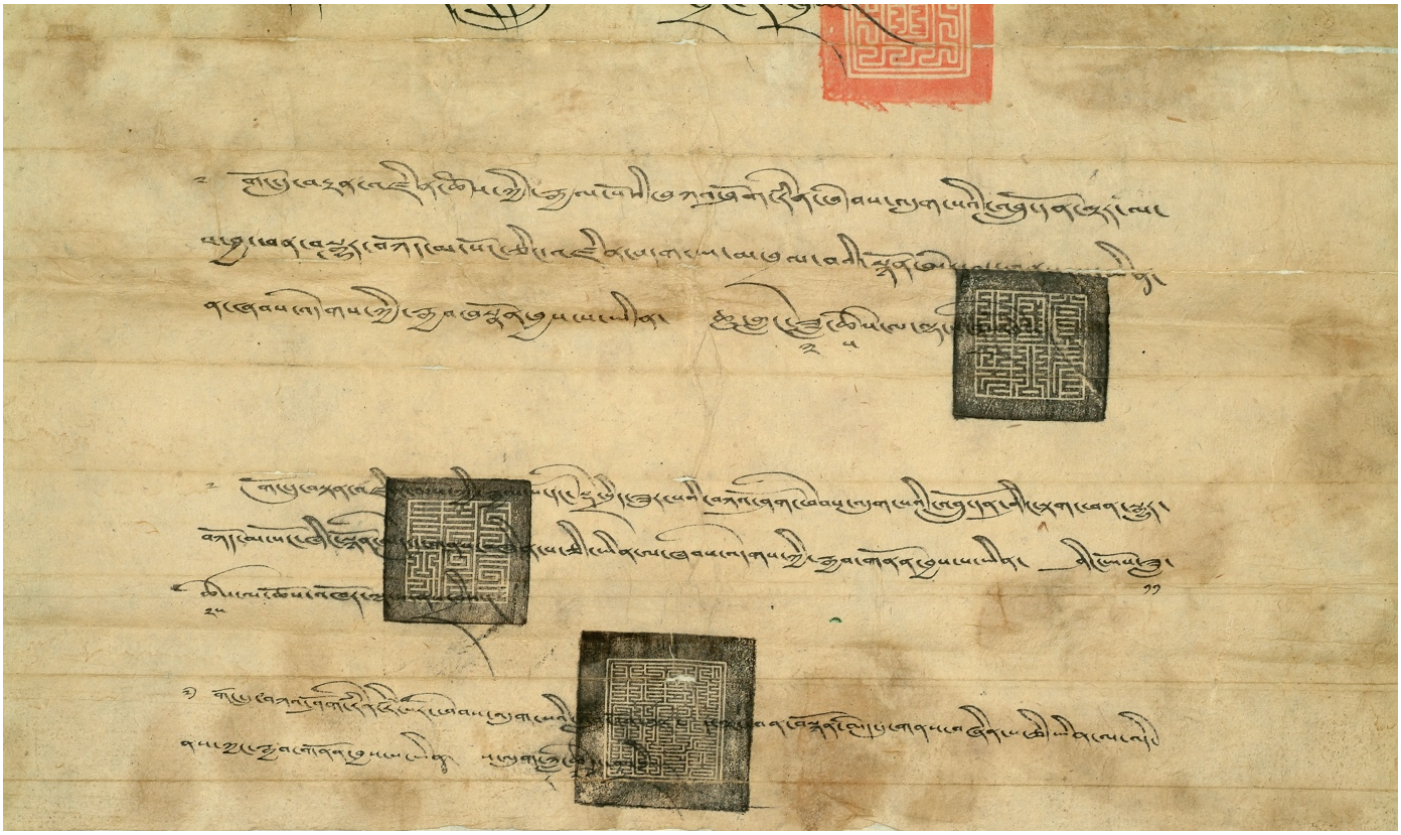


The fourth seal impression was placed at the end of a confirmation note from 1673 (*chu glang*).[69]



3.2 x 3.2 (2.4 x 2.4) cm

[69] LTWA: 0873_LTWA_52. For another image of the document see under SEAL 22.



The inscription of the seal impression says *shang ba guo gong zhi yin* (赏巴國公之印), meaning "seal of duke Shangba." Written in the small seal script the inscription looks like this:

賞 巴 國 公 之 印

Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the appendix to the "Guide for the Blind" has an approximate drawing of the seal impression.[70] Size and inscription are identical with an iron seal having a wooden knob with a mother-of-pearl coating kept in the Potala.[71] The seal has a height of 7.5 cm. The inscription seems to be copied from a larger iron seal with a side lengths of 9.5 cm. Volume Three of the picture album *Precious Deposits* contains photographs of that seal.[72] Its back repeats on the right side the wording of the stamp plate *shang ba guo gong zhi yin* (賞巴國公之印) in Chinese characters. It also provides on the left side a date for the production of the seal saying that it was made in the first month of the twelfth year of Yongle, which corresponds to January or February 1414. The editors of the *Precious Deposits* identify Chinese Shangba (賞巴) with Tibetan Byams pa, a place located in lHo kha area.

[70] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 44.

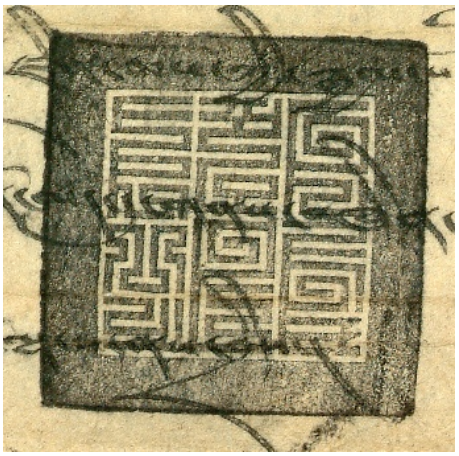
[71] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 26.

[72] vJam-dbyangs, Wang Mingxing, et al. 2000, 146–147. For another photograph see Tenzin Namgyal et al. 2001, 143. There the seal is referred to as "The Seal of Situ".

SEAL 17

Unusual is the impression of a seal used by the fourth Tibetan regent Blo bzang sbyin pa, who was in office from 1675 to 1679. Among the digitized material are four impressions of the seal.

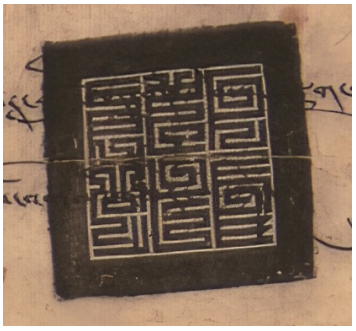
The first impression is from January 10, 1676 (*shing yos zla 11 tshes 25*).[73]



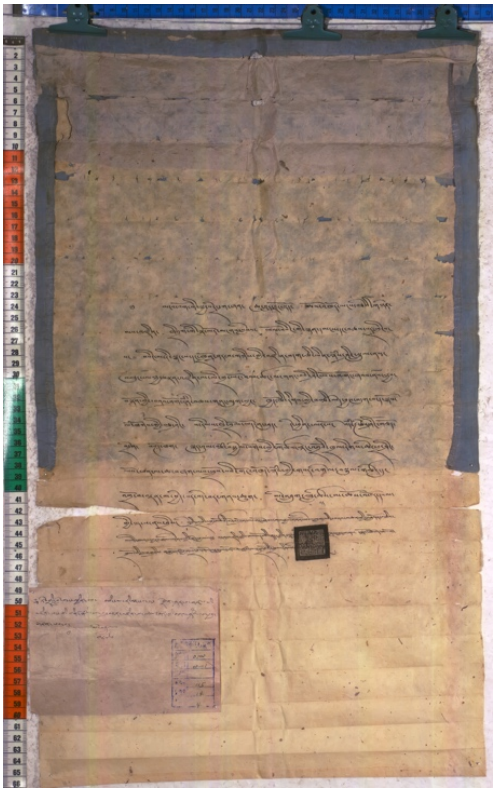
3.1 x 3.0 (2.2 x 2.2) cm

See the corresponding document image under SEAL 16.

The second seal impression is also from 1676 (*me 'brug*).[74]

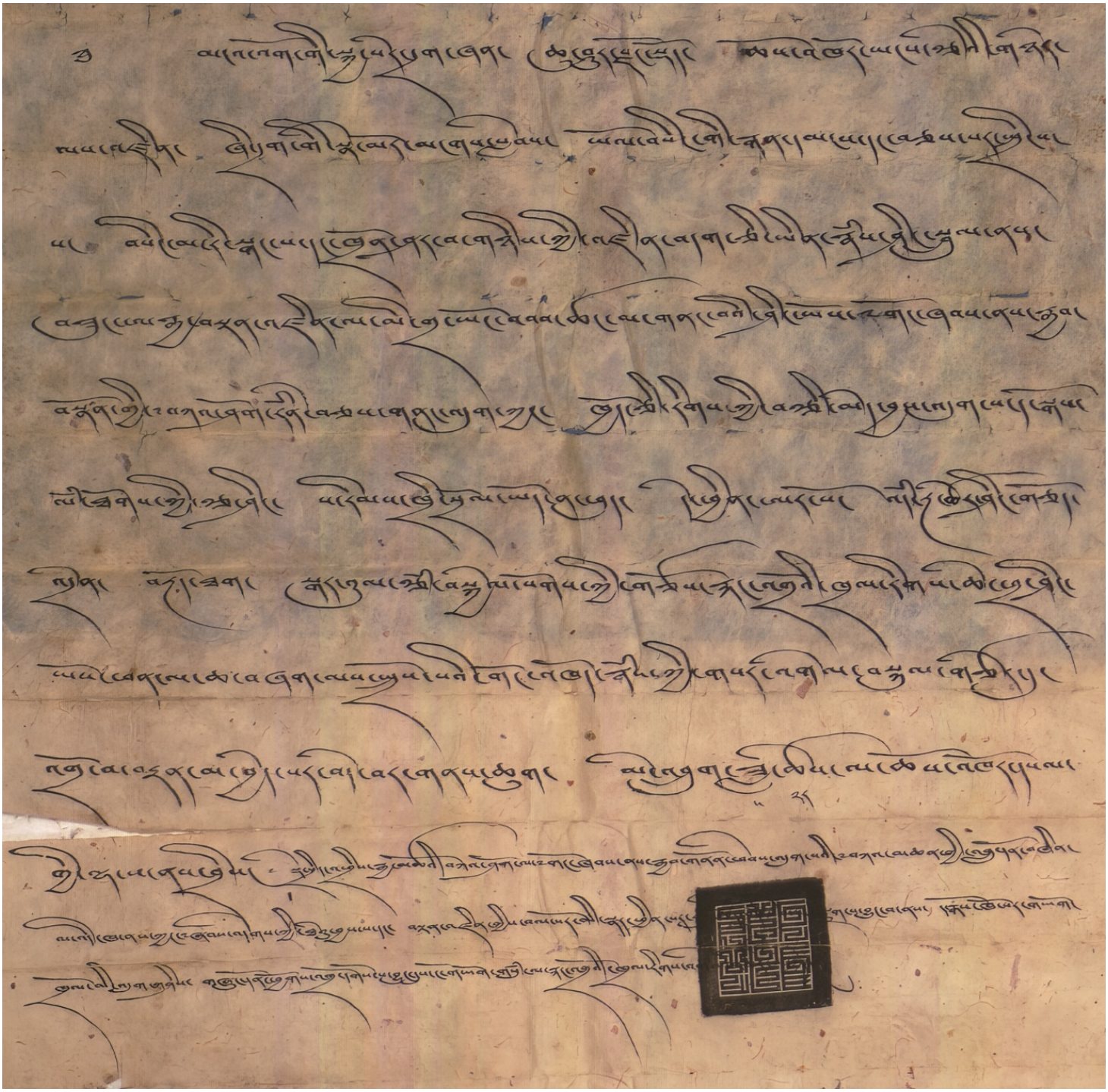


3.1 x 3.1 (2.2 x 2.2) cm

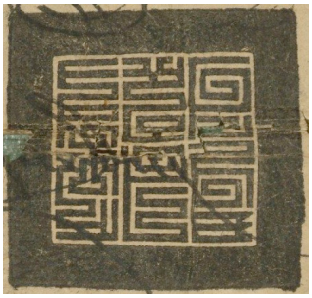


[73] LTWA: 0873_LTWA_52.

[74] 012 2-1/#/115/14/4 (ID 2336).

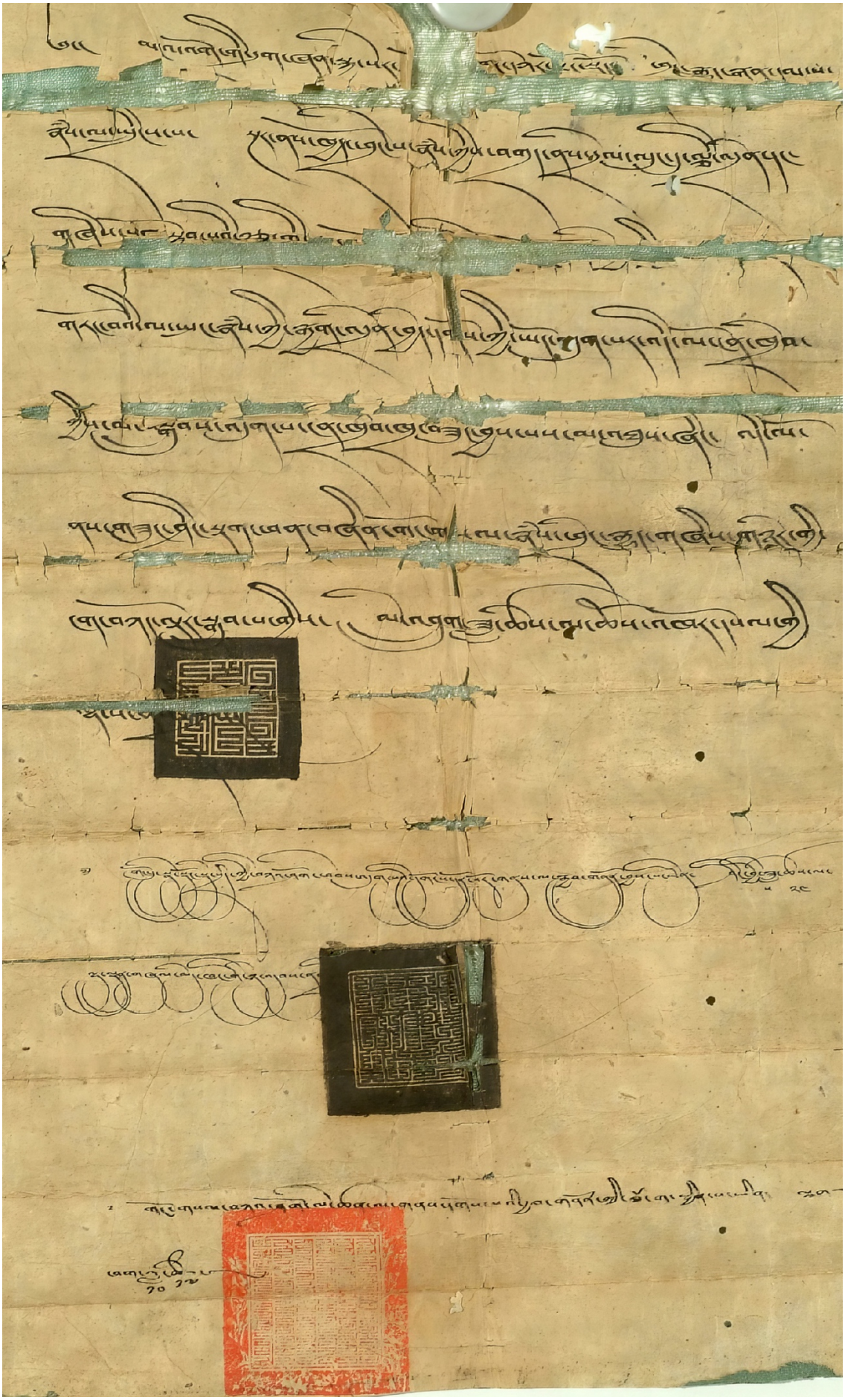


The third seal impression is also from 1676 (*me 'brug*).[75]

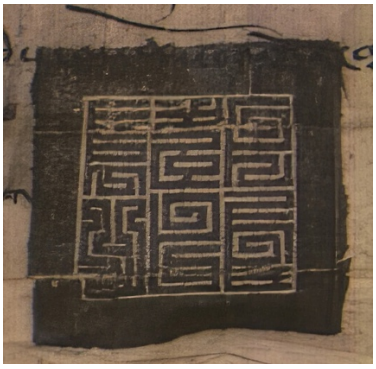


3.1 x 3.0 (2.2 x 2.1) cm

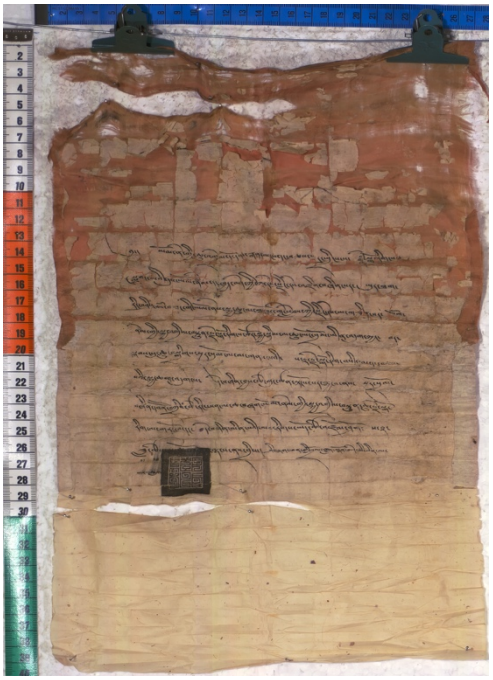
[75] AA: 0798_AA_2_1_166.

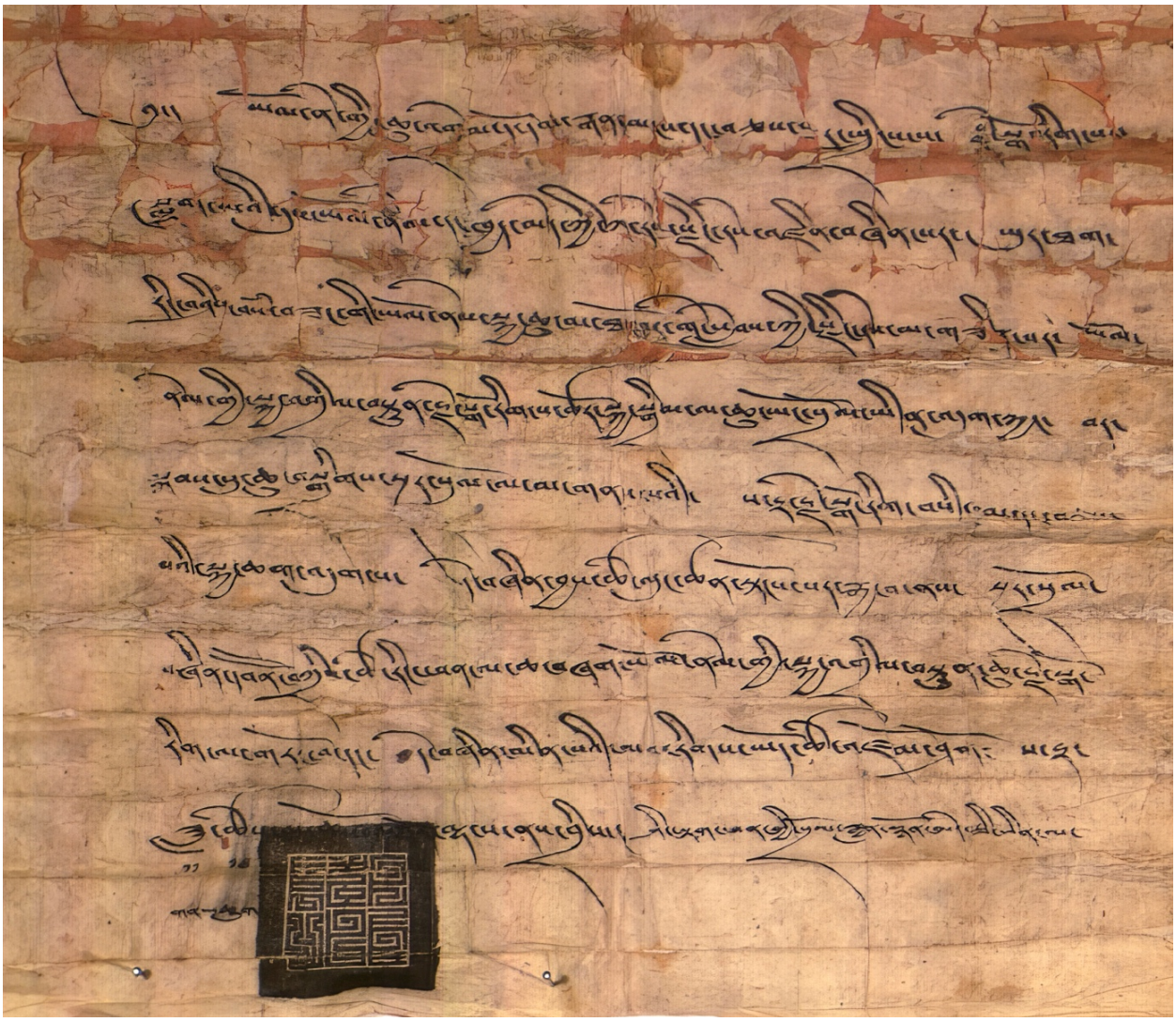


The fourth seal impression dates from 1678.[76]



3.0 x 2.8 (2.2 x 2.1) cm





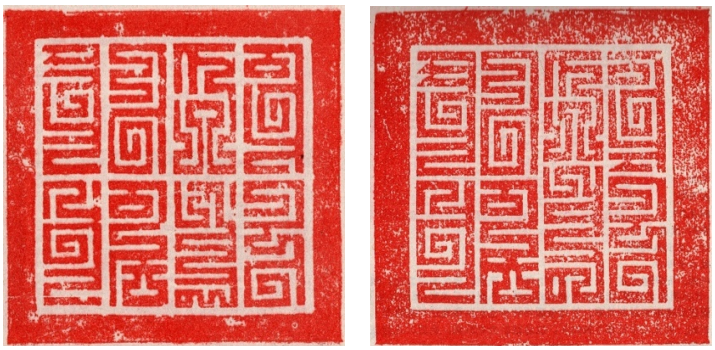
[76] 012 2-1/#/5/1/4 (ID 1086).

Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the appendix to the "Guide for the Blind" gives a very rough drawing of this seal.[77]

The similarity to the *hor yig* is striking, yet not a single letter can be identified. However, there is a simple way to solve the puzzle. If we turn the seal impression 180 degrees, we can see that it is a variant of the 'Phags pa script as it was used on seals during the Yuan dynasty.

Now, of course, the Tibetan script of all four documents showing this seal impression is upside down.

All the letters of the seal impression can also be found on a well-known seal of the Yuan period.[78] However, some letters of the Yuan seal are missing on Blo bzang sbyin pa's seal. I know two varieties of this seal. The impressions of both seals are much larger than those of the seal used by Blo bzang sbyin pa. Apart from minor differences in design, they differ only by one letter in the fourth column.



[77] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 45.

[78] For the details see SEAL 60.

The four columns of the inscription read from the left to the right:

1. *thung ling*
2. *shi gyaw*
3. *tay 'wen*
4. *gui shhi* respectively *gue shhi*

These syllables are the transcription of a well-known Chinese Yuan title in 'Phags pa script. The inscription represents *tongling shijiao dayuan guoshi* (统领释教大元國师), meaning "Leader of the Buddhist teachings, National Preceptor of the Great Yuan(-Dynasty)."

However, Blo bzang sbyin pa's seal only shows the first three columns of the original seal, with the lower end of the first two columns cut off and the last character of the third column slightly altered.

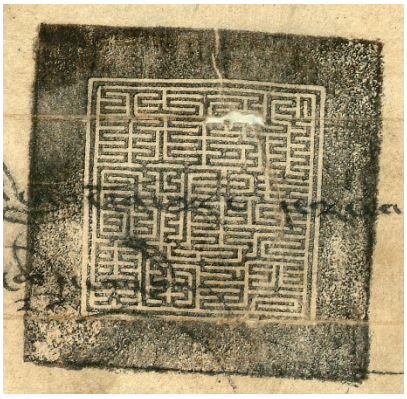
The word *guoshi*, "national preceptor," which is the actual title, is missing completely from the inscription. Obviously, the content of the inscription was no longer understood, or the text itself had become completely irrelevant.

SEAL 18

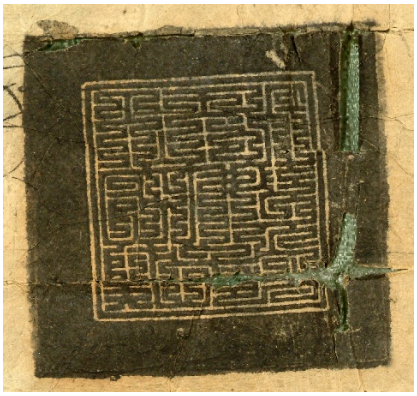
Apparently, it was not necessary to understand the content and meaning of the inscription of a seal in order to use it for the certification of documents. In principle, it was therefore also possible to engrave seals with pseudo-inscriptions as long as they clearly distinguished the seal impression from other impressions. It is therefore not surprising that seals were also used on which only a pseudo-inscription was engraved. Various writing systems were imitated. For example, the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho used two different seals that clearly imitated the nine-folded seal script (SEAL 18 and SEAL 19).

The following two seal impressions are from the first one.[79]

[79] LTWA: 0873_LTWA_52 (document image under SEAL 16, for a transliteration and translation of the document see Schwieger, forthcoming 2025a), AA: 0798_AA_2_1_166 (see document image under SEAL 17).



3.7 x 3.7 (2.5 x 2.6) cm

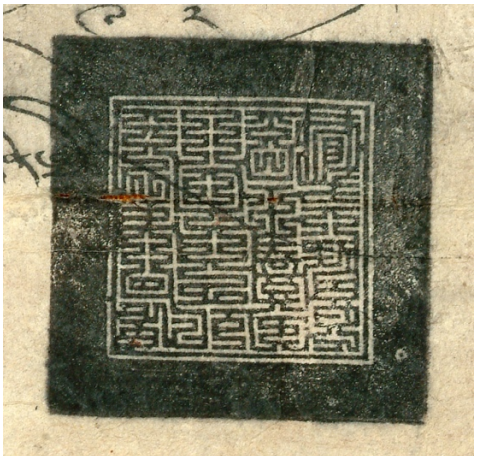


3.8 x 3.7 (2.5 x 2.5) cm

While the appendix of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* provided by the BDRC refers to this inscription as a *hor yig brdzus ma*, Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the same text uses the term *hor yig 'bru man*.[80] I am not aware that the term *hor yig 'bru man* is used elsewhere.

SEAL 19

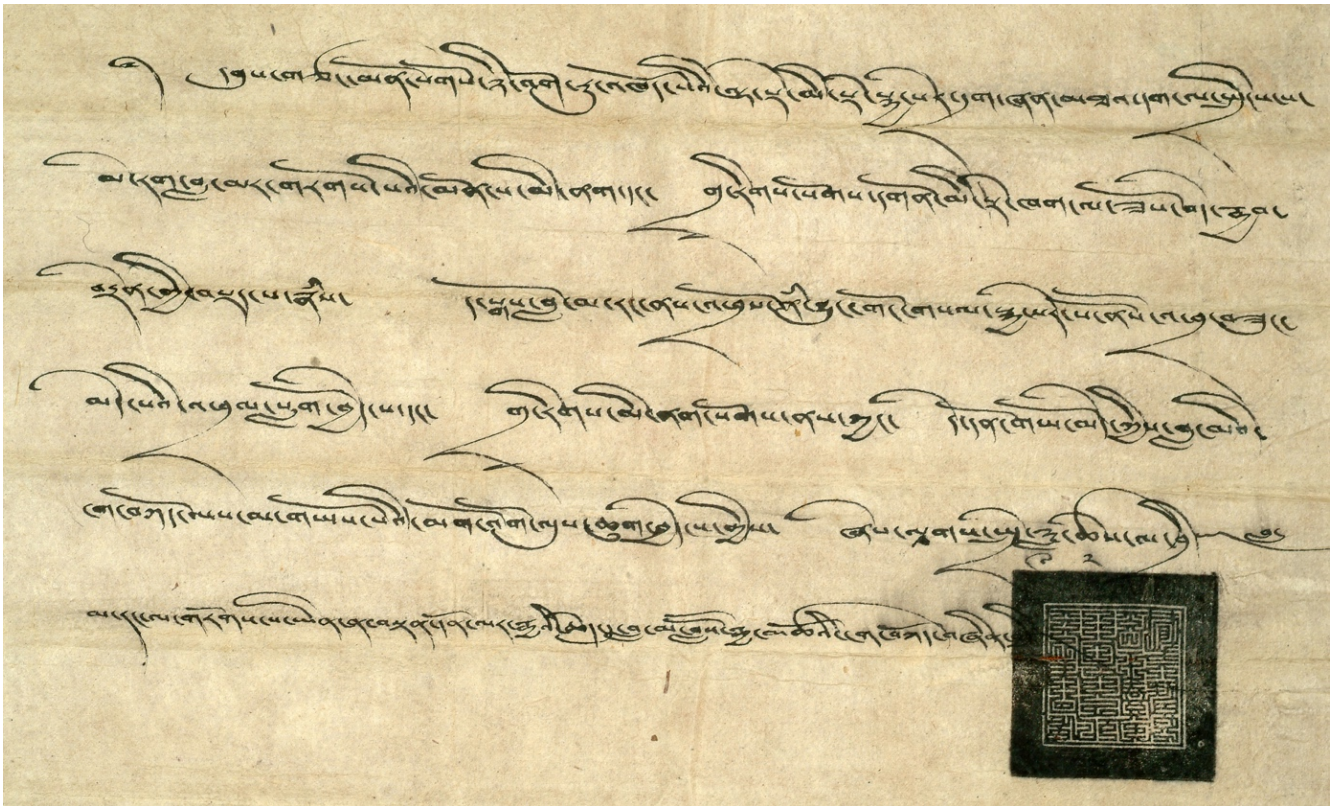
Regarding the impression of the second seal of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, except of the Tibetan *dbu can* letter *a*, which is depicted in the second column seen from the right, the entire "inscription" is nothing but a pseudo script. The following seal impression dates from 1680 (*lcags spre*).[81]



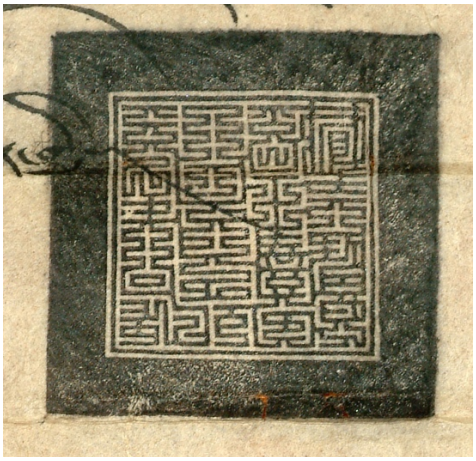
3.5 x 3.5 (2.5 x 2.5) cm

[80] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 24r; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 47.

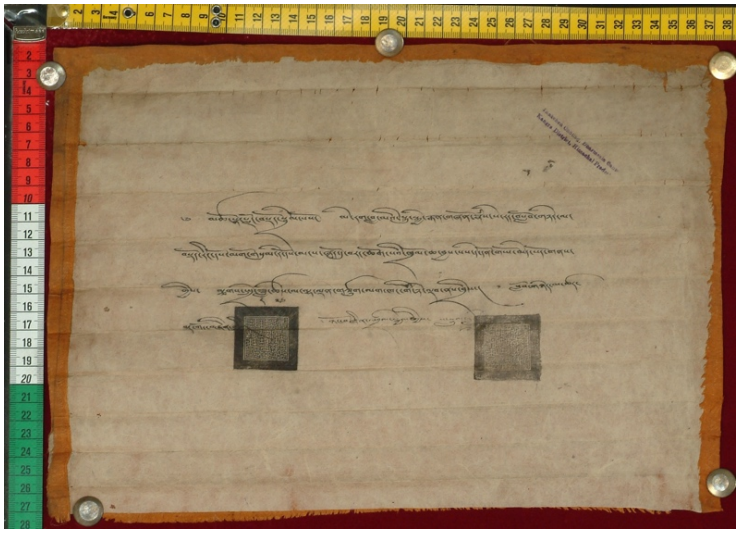
[81] LTWA: 0940_LTWA_152.



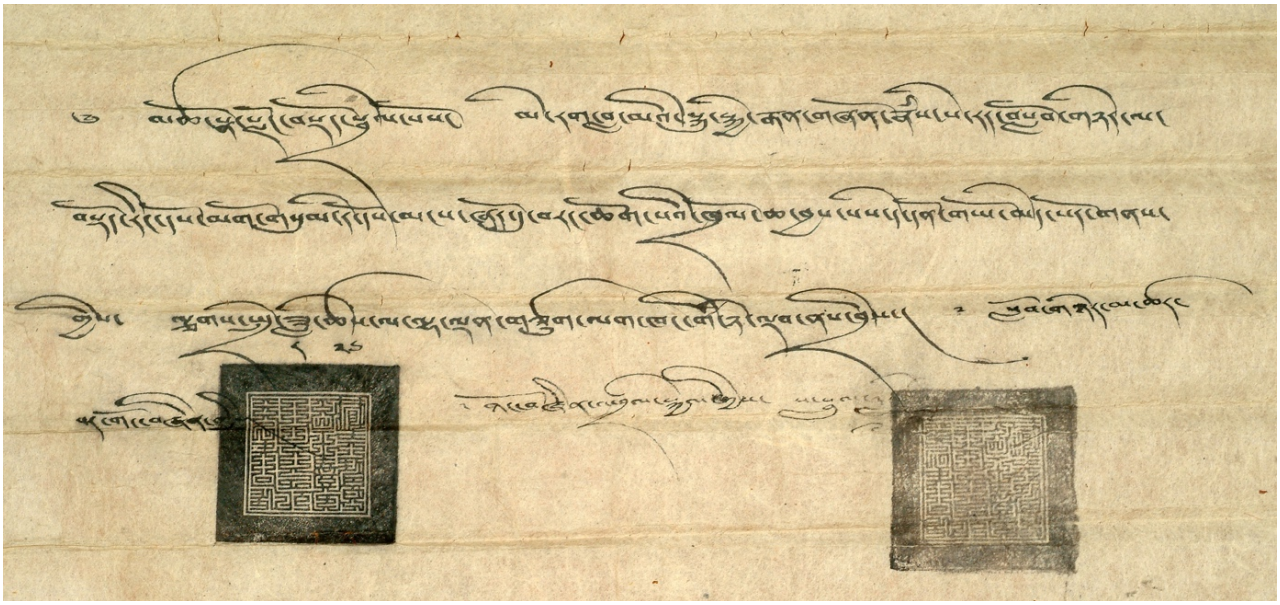
The following seal impression also dates from 1680 (*lcags spre*).[82]



3.5 x 3.5 (2.5 x 2.5) cm



[82] LTWA: 0942_LTWA_154.



The second impression of the same seal dates from 1689 (*sa sbrul*).

SEAL 20

In this context, I would also like to mention a seal with an inscription in the nine-folded script that has been associated with Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. It is a silver *situ* seal kept in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa.

The inscription reads *si tu zhi yin* (司徒之印), "seal of Situ." Converted into the small seal script, the characters look like this:

Depending on the publication, the dimensions for the height are given as 10.9 or 12 cm and for the side length of the square printing plate as 9.4 or 9.5 cm.[83] On its back the seal shows in Chinese characters once more the inscription *si tu zhi yin* (司徒之印), "seal of Situ," as well as the inscription

[83] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 23; vJam-dbyangs, Wang Mingxing, et al. 2000, 142 (no. 51); Tenzin Namgyal et al. 2001, 143.

yongle shi nian er yue ri libu zao (永乐十年二月日礼部造), "manufactured by the Ministry of Rites in the second month of the tenth year of Yongle." This corresponds to March/April 1412. Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei assume that this seal is one of several seals that according to the "Veritable records of Ming" (*Ming shilu* 明实录) were given in 1413 to several Tibetan recipients.[84] According to Zhu Detao, this seal later came into the possession of the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho and continued to be used by him.[85] He also states that it is attributed to the regent Blo bzang mthu stobs in the seal book of the Tibetan Council of Ministers (*bka' shag*). Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* presents a faulty redrawing together with the comment that the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho stamped this red seal impression on edicts (*bka' shog*) issued in favor of petty kingdoms in the periphery.[86] So far, however, no document of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho with an impression of this seal seems to be known.

SEAL 21

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Khoshots also used seals with Chinese inscriptions in the nine-folded script.

The following two impressions belong to one of the seals used by Gushri Khan (1582–1655). The first one dates from 1649 (*sa glang*).[87]

4.7 x 4.6 (3.2 x 3.2) cm

For an image of the document see under SEAL 4a.

The second seal impression dates from 1644 (*shing sprel*).[88]

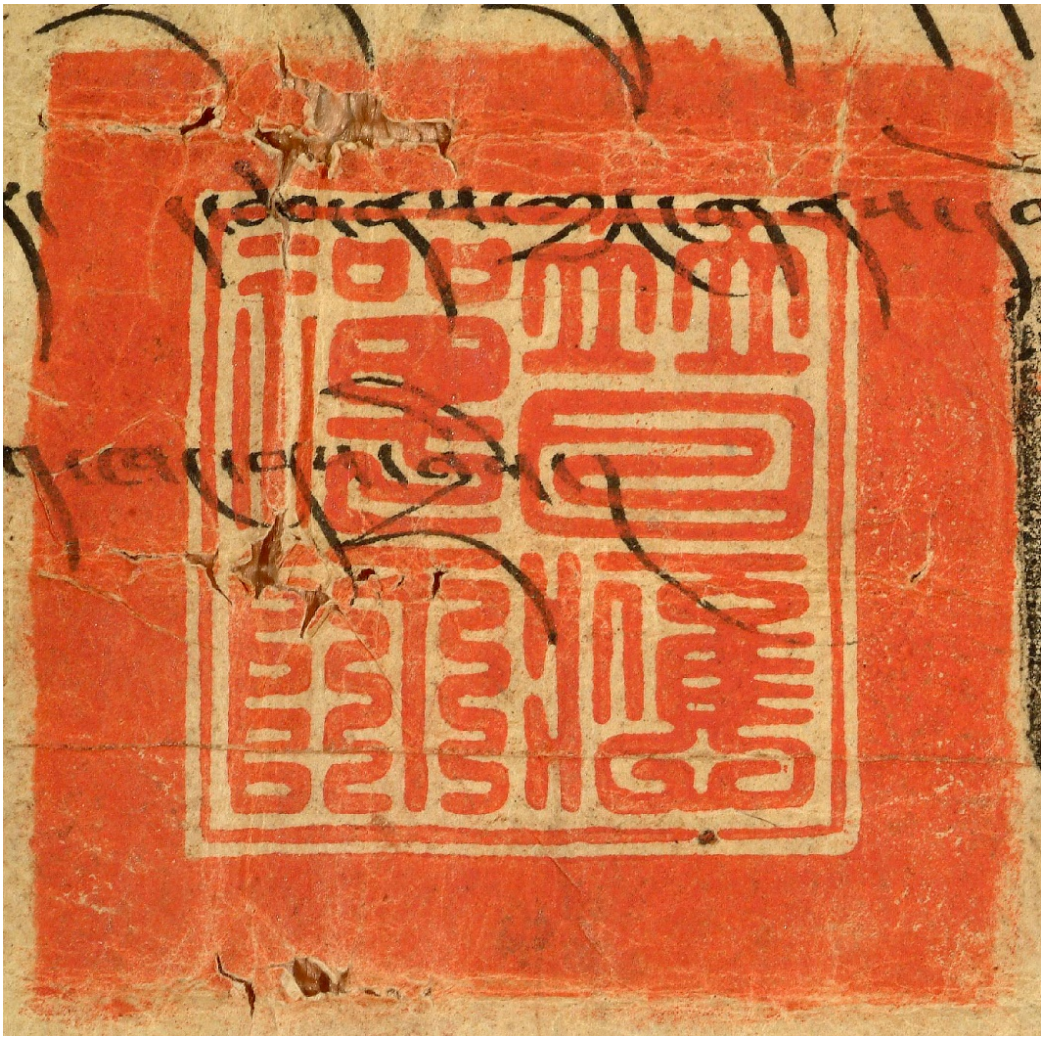
[84] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 23.

[85] Zhu Detao 2020b.

[86] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 49.

[87] KDL: 012 2-1/#/7/5/4 (ID 1110).

[88] AA: 0795_AA_2_1_163.



4.7 x 4.5 (3.2 x 3.2) cm

For an image of the document see under SEAL 4a.

The seal script shows the words *pu ying chan shi* (普应禅师), meaning "meditation master Puying." To make it easier to analyze the characters, they are reproduced here once again in the small seal script.

According to Ou Chaogui 欧朝贵 and Qi Mei 其美, the seal originally belonged to a monk from Central Tibet known in Chinese by the name Puying.[89] However, Otasaka has proven that the person is identical to a monk called Rin chen or Rin chen rtse mo from A mdo. Apparently, he was the first person to be awarded this title by the Ming emperor. He had received title and seal during the Zhengtong era (1427–1464, r. 1436–1449; second reign as Tianshun 1457–1464) in the fifteenth century.[90] It is not known how the seal later came into the hands of Gushri Khan. It is hard to imagine that such a monk's seal was sent to him by the emperor. It is more likely that it fell into his hands during or after the conquest of A mdo and that he continued to use it as his personal seal from then on, completely ignoring the seal's inscription.

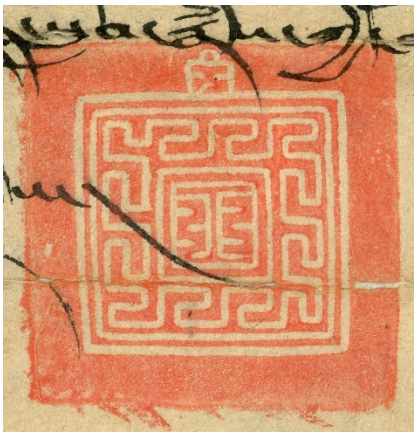
[89] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 39.

[90] Otasaka 1994, 71–72.

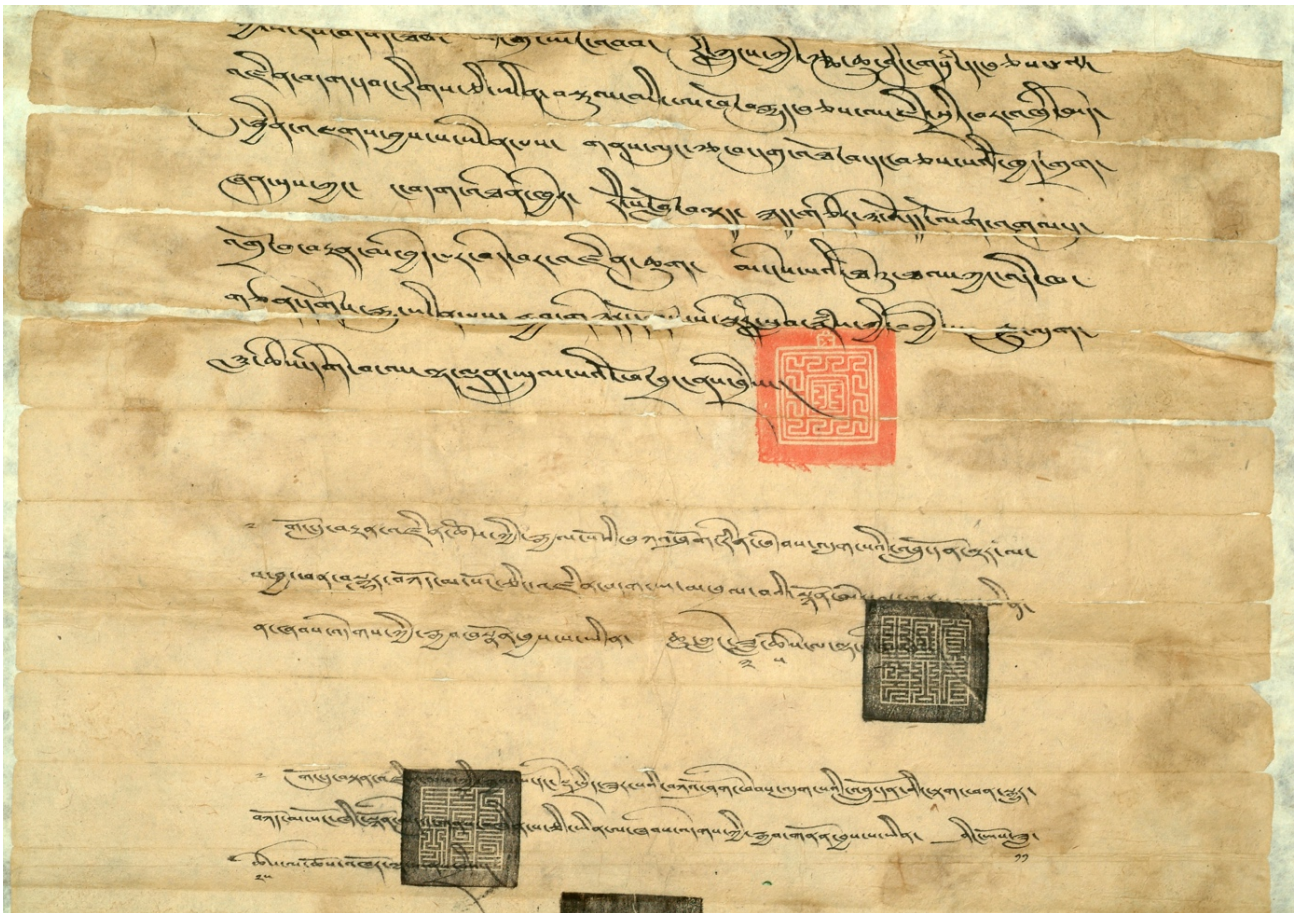
The seal itself was made of wood and fitted with a mother-of-pearl knob. Its height is 9 cm. The square seal matrix has a side length of 4.7 cm.[91]

SEAL 22

The following seal impression from 1643 is from another seal used by Gushri Khan.[92] In the center of the print, a pseudo-character can be seen, which resembles the characters of the ninefold seal script.



3.6 x 3.6 (2.6 x 2.6) cm



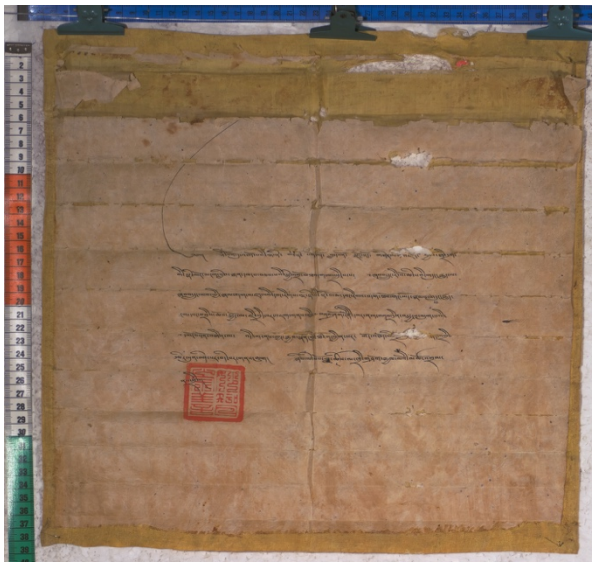
[91] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 39.

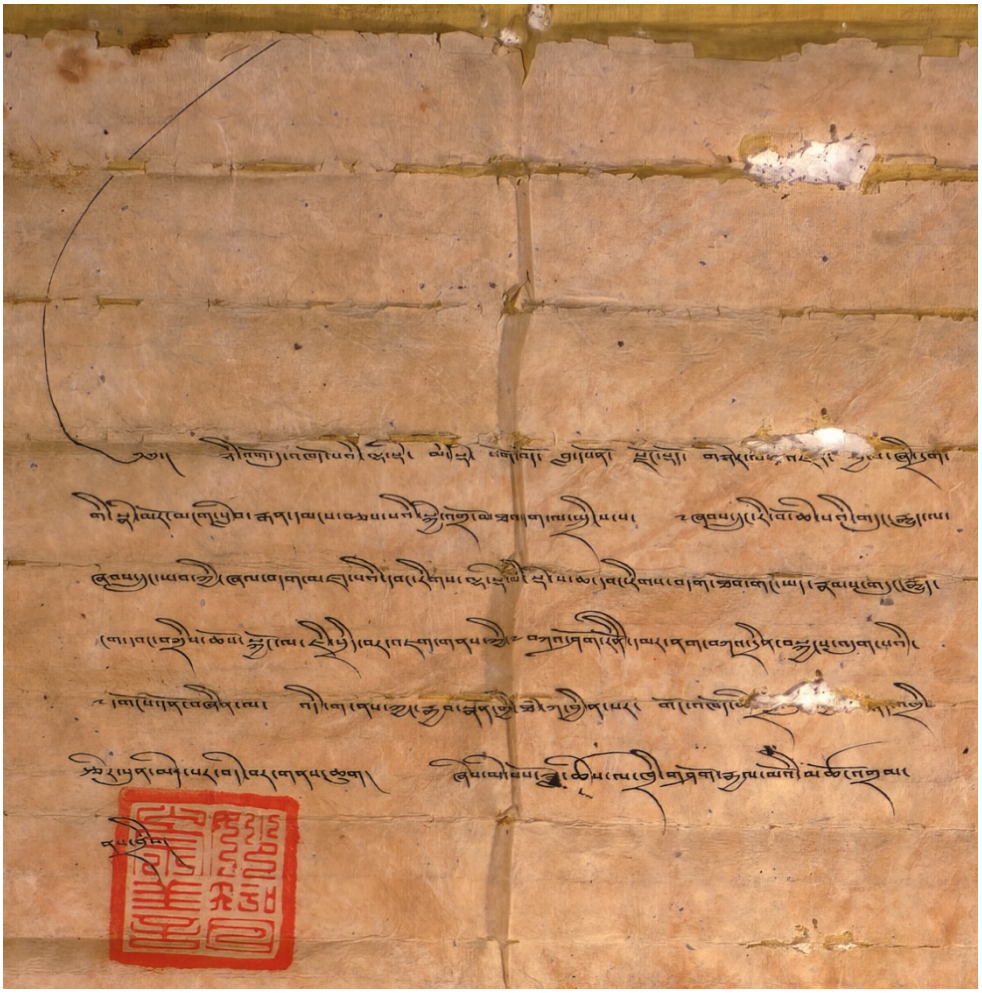
[92] LTWA: 0873_LTWA_52.

SEAL 23

Finally, there is a document from 1687 showing the impression of a seal from Dalai Hong Taiji, the sixth son of Gushri Khan.[93]

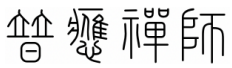
4.5 x 4.5 (3.9 x 3.8) cm





[93] KDL: 012 2-1/#/93/6/4 (ID 2096).

Written in the nine-folded script the text reads: *miao zhi chong shan* (妙智崇善), which means "Wonderful Wisdom and Good Deeds," a phrase that generally refers to a Buddhist context but is not an official title. Transferred into the small Chinese seal script the characters look like this:

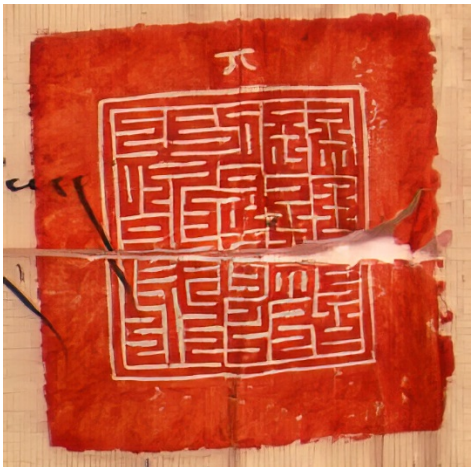


Note that the components in the second character have partially swapped places.

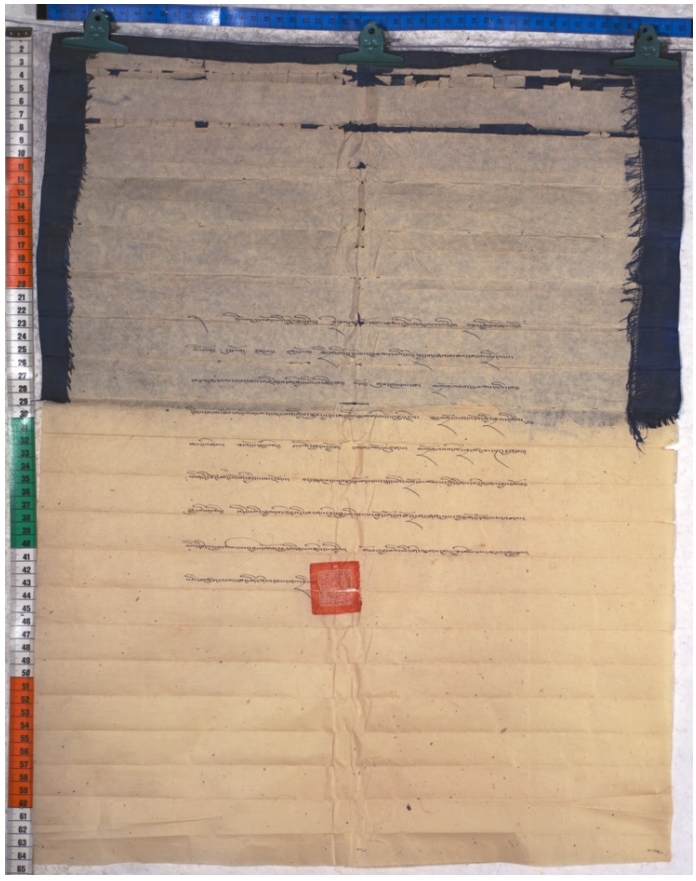
The impression corresponds to an ivory seal with a knob in the shape of a Dharma wheel originally kept in the Potala that gives on its back the date "fifth month of the fourteenth year of Yongle," which corresponds to May or June 1416. However, the side length of this seal is given as 4.2 cm.[94]

SEAL 24

The red impression on a document issued in 1661 is an imitation of the nine-folded script.[95] According to information from the Tibetan Archives, the document was issued by the second Tibetan regent 'Phrin las rgya mtsho. However, the seal impressions of Tibetan regents were usually black, which is why this is probably the impression of the seal of Dayan Ochir Khan alias bsTan 'dzin Dayan Khan (reign 1658–1668).

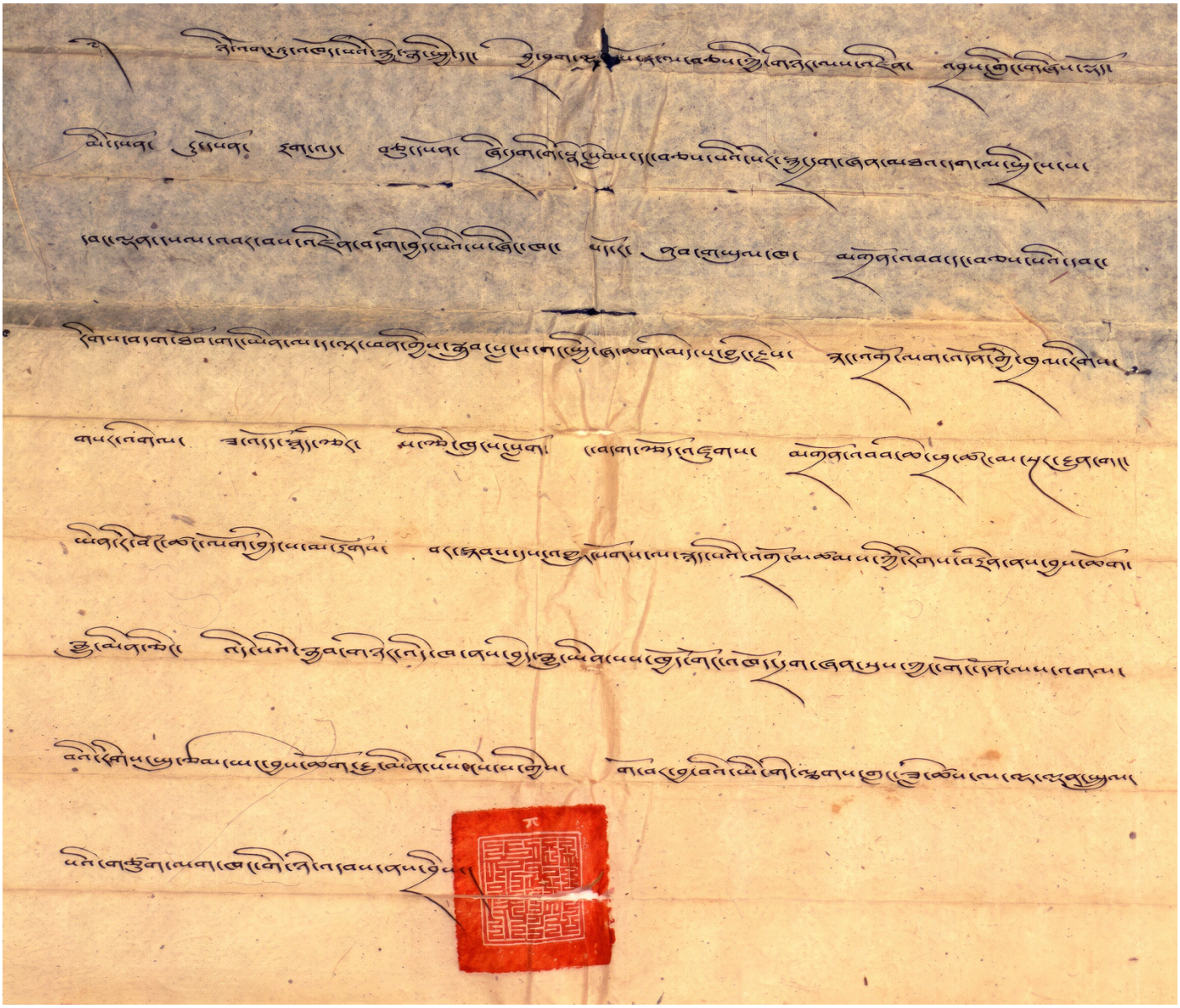


4.0 x 4.0 (2.5 x 2.8) cm



[94] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 41; Li 2015, seal no.1.

[95] KDL: 012 2-1/#/38/1/4 (ID 1405).



The Chinese character *wu* (兀), engraved in the outer frame, indicates the top of the impression. Mitruev pointed out two seals of Ayuki, khan of the Kalmyks (reign 1669–1724), with similar pseudo-inscriptions. One was probably sent to him by the Tibetan regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho on behalf of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the other later by the Sixth Dalai Lama.[96] Accordingly, it seems to have been common practice in the early phase of the dGa' ldan pho brang to imitate the Chinese nine-folded script on official seal stamps.

[96] Mitruev 2021b, 48–49, 53–55, 57, 59.

1.2 Candidates for the True *Hor yig brdzus ma*

Most of the seals presented so far were either recycled Ming seals that were used completely detached from their original context, even without reference to the original seal owners or the meaning of the seal inscription, or seals that merely imitated a Chinese seal script. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, in any case, by using such seals the seal owners evoked the false impression that these seals had been awarded by an authority outside the Tibetan sphere. Only one of the seal inscriptions presented here so far could be considered a *hor yig brdzus ma* (SEAL 15). Thus, the question is: Do we have more examples for a pseudo script from the seventeenth century that could be called *hor yig brdzus ma*?

I suspect the following seal (SEAL 25a, 25b, 25c) to be such a case, even though it is one of the best-known seals from the time of the dGa' ldan pho brang government.

The seal was given the name *Vajradhara* in the attachment of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and presumably also in seal books of the Tibetan government because the middle column allegedly shows the word *vajradhara* in 'Phags pa script. But before I go into the inscription in more detail, let me briefly differentiate between the varieties known so far.

The *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and also the seal book of the *bka' shag* mention an older and smaller *Vajradhara* seal on the one hand and a younger and larger one on the other.[97] The older one is said to have been given to the Third Dalai Lama bSod nams rgya mtsho (1543–1588) by Altan Khan (1507–1582). Both seals are classified as *rgya dam* or *bka' rgya dam phrug*, "seal for government orders." While Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*'s seal catalog does not provide proper images of the seal impressions,[98] the seal book of the *bka' shag* contains drawings of the two versions, whereby the impression of the older seal is approximately 1.18 times smaller.[99] However, it is more than doubtful whether the two illustrations are true to scale.

SEAL 25a

Schuh measured 4.1 x 4.1 (2.9 x 2.9) cm for an impression of the older seal.[100] I measured for the seal impression of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho from 1678 depicted below 3.9 x 4.2 (2.7 x 2.8) cm.[101] The slight deviation is probably due to the damage and creases in the paper.

[97] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 23r (Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 35); photograph in Daowei Cairangjia et al. 2011, cover, inside.

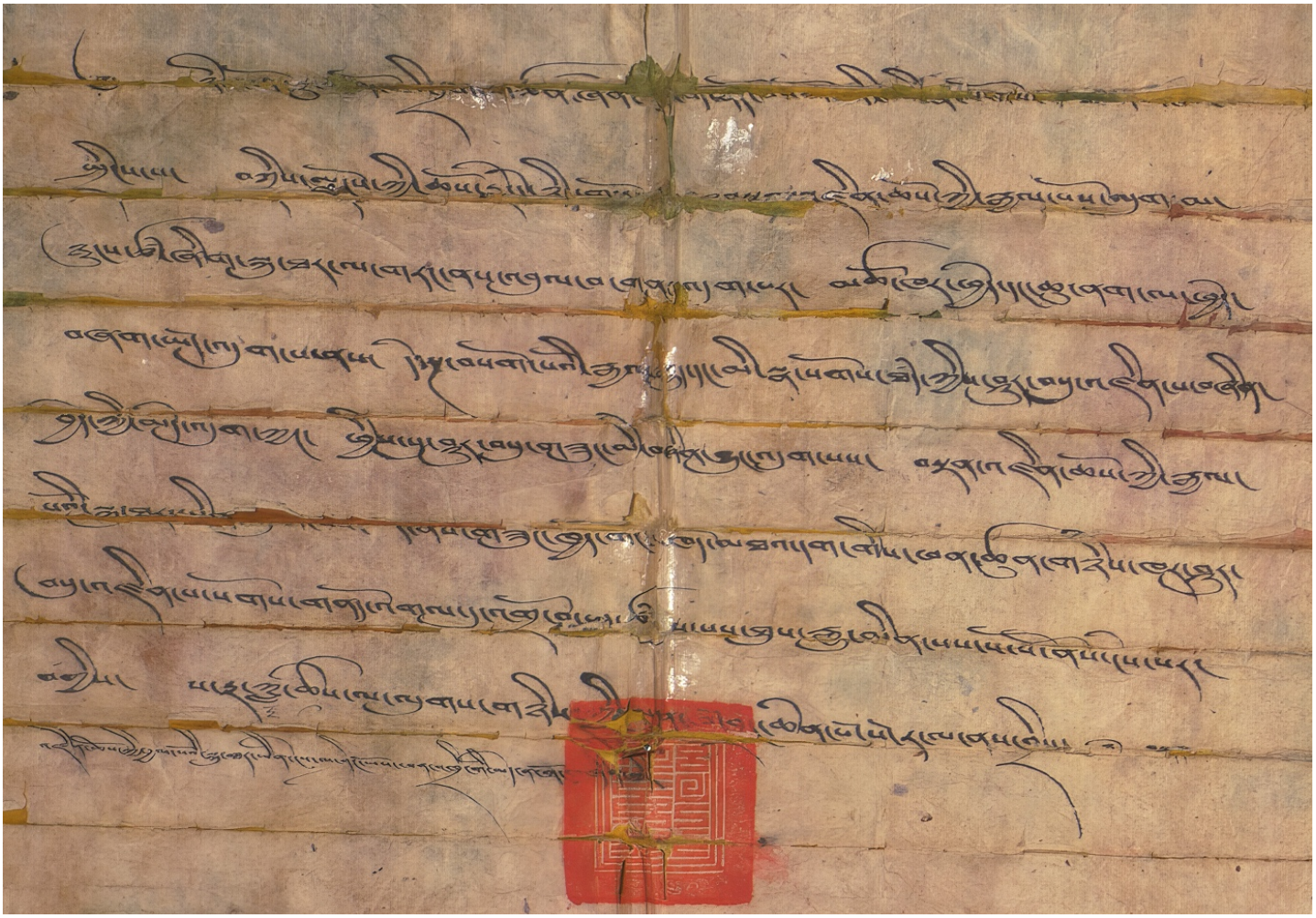
[98] See Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 35.

[99] Daowei Cairangjia et al. 2011, cover, inside.

[100] Schuh 1981, 12.

[101] KDL: 12 2-1/#/13/5/4 (ID 1167). The Tibetan Archives dated the document 1798, thereby attributing it to the Eighth Dalai Lama 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804). As shown elsewhere, this is not correct (see Schwieger 2013, 99–100). Schuh 2018, 201, still follows the wrong dating.

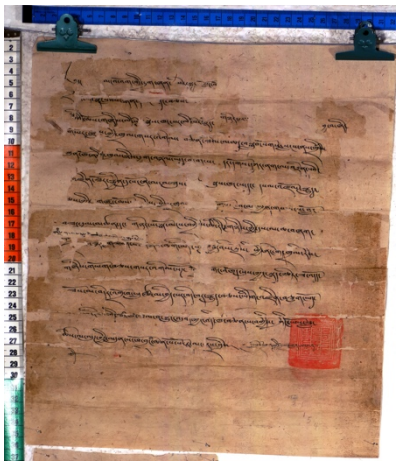
3.9 x 4.2 (2.7 x 2.8) cm

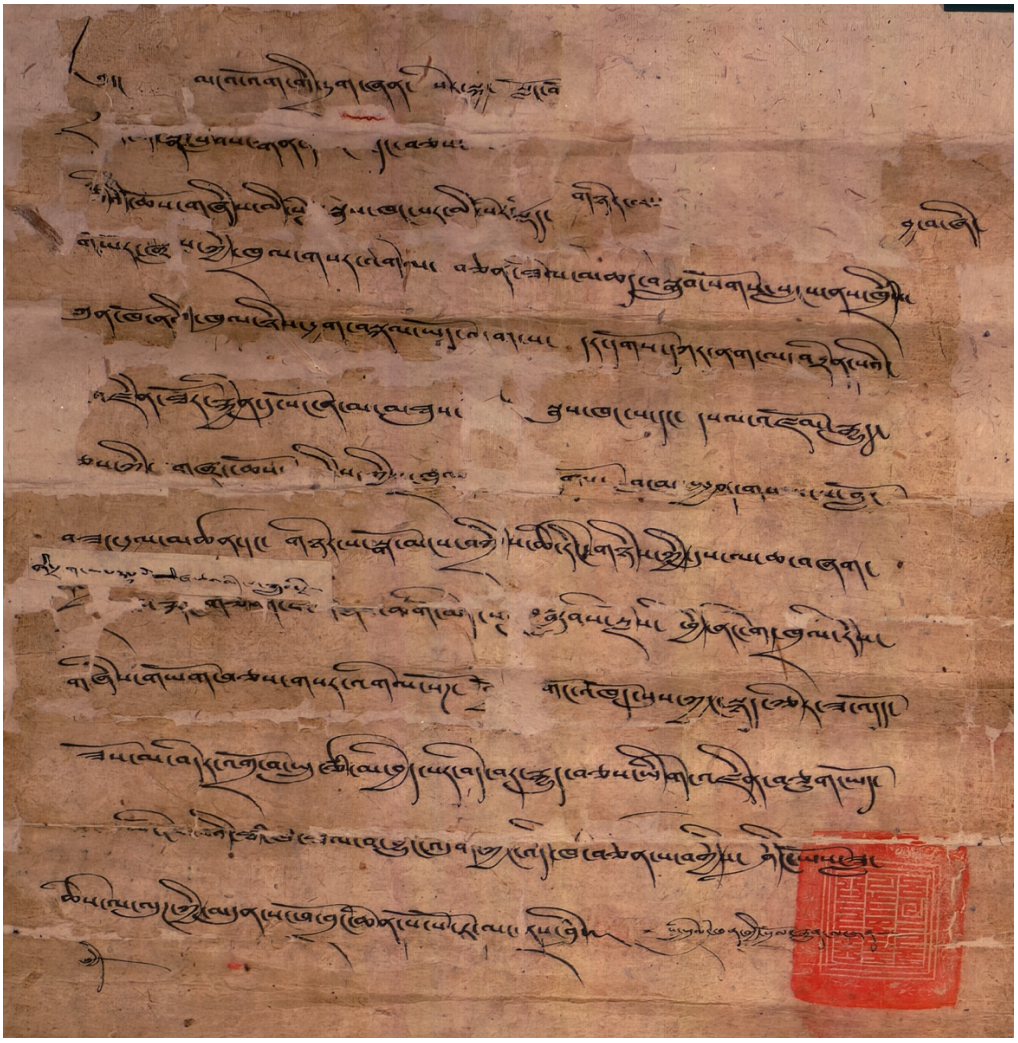


SEAL 25b

Although older than the seal impression of S24a, the dimensions of the following seal impression of the Fifth Dalai Lama from 1675 (*shing yos*) are closer to those of S24c.[102] However, the relatively broad lines of the letters are more similar to SEAL 25a.

4.5 x 4.6 (3.1 x 3.1) cm

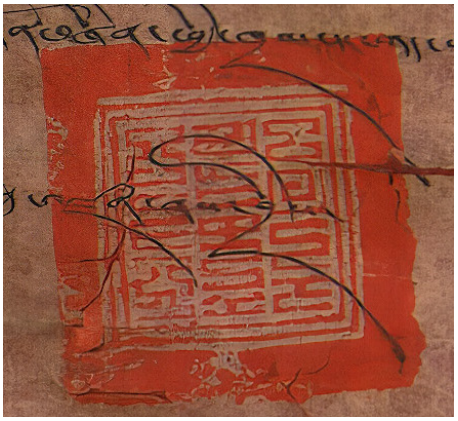




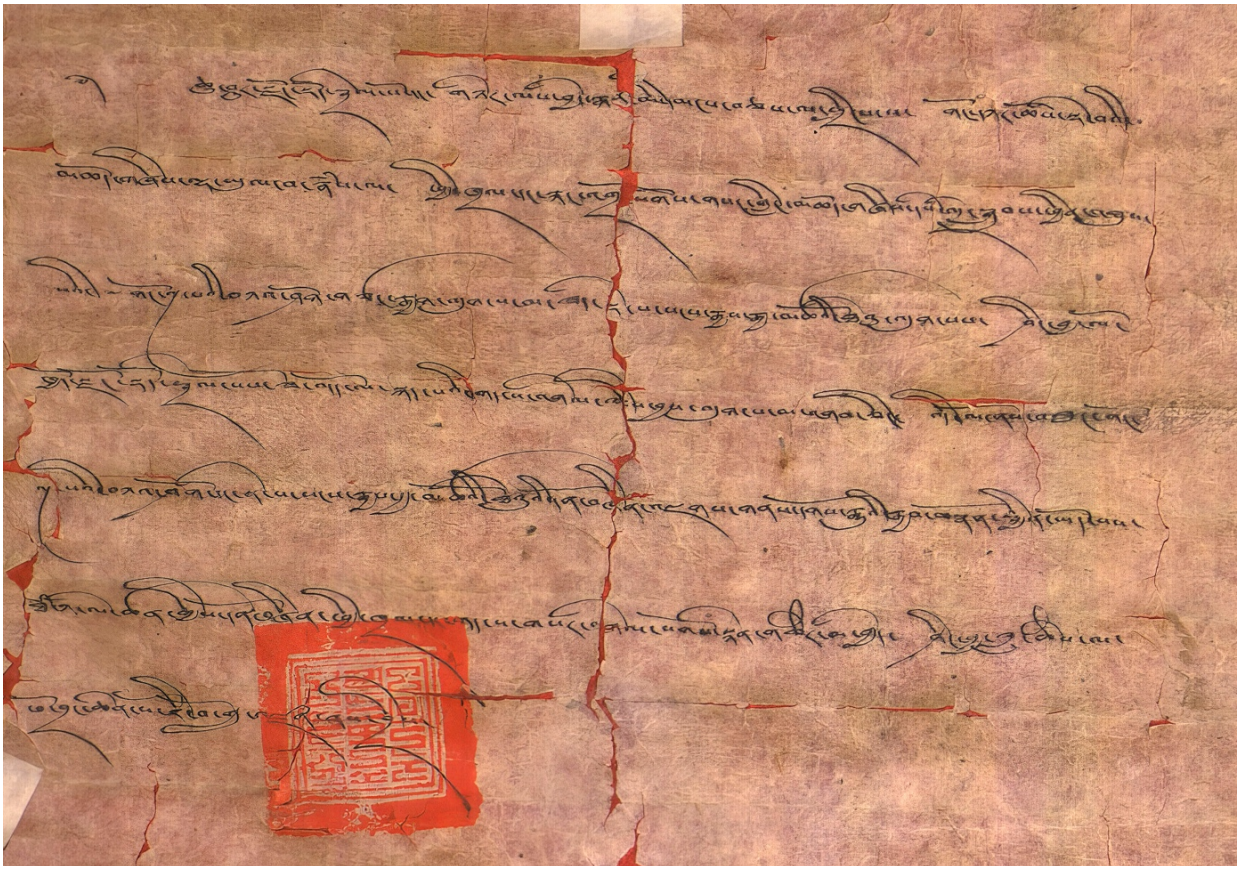
[102] 012 2-1/#/1/5/4 (ID 1054).

SEAL 25c

Schuh's dimensions of various impressions of the younger seal vary between 4.3 x 4.4 and 4.5 x 4.5 (3.1 x 3.1 and 3.3 x 3.2) cm.[103] My dimensions of impressions of the younger seal vary between 4.2 x 4.2 and 4.3 x 4.3 (3.1 x 3.1 and 3.2 x 3.2) cm. The following seal impression of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683–1706) dates from 1705 (*shing bya*).[104]



4.3 x 4.3 (3.2 x 3.1) cm

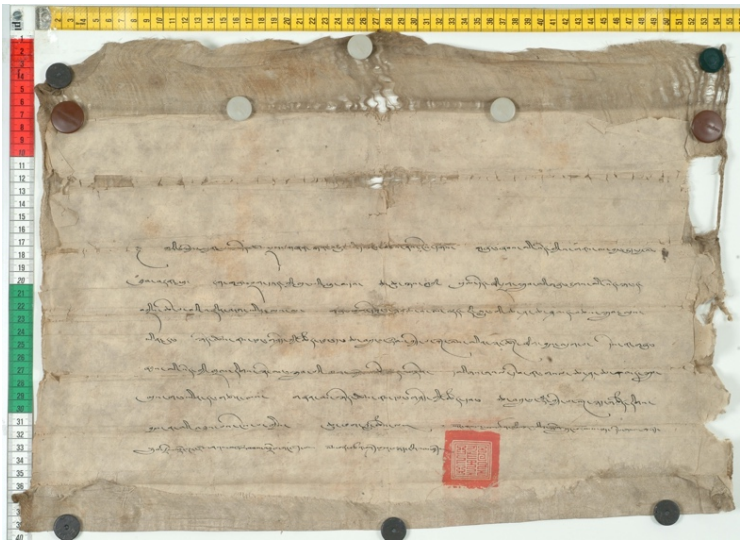


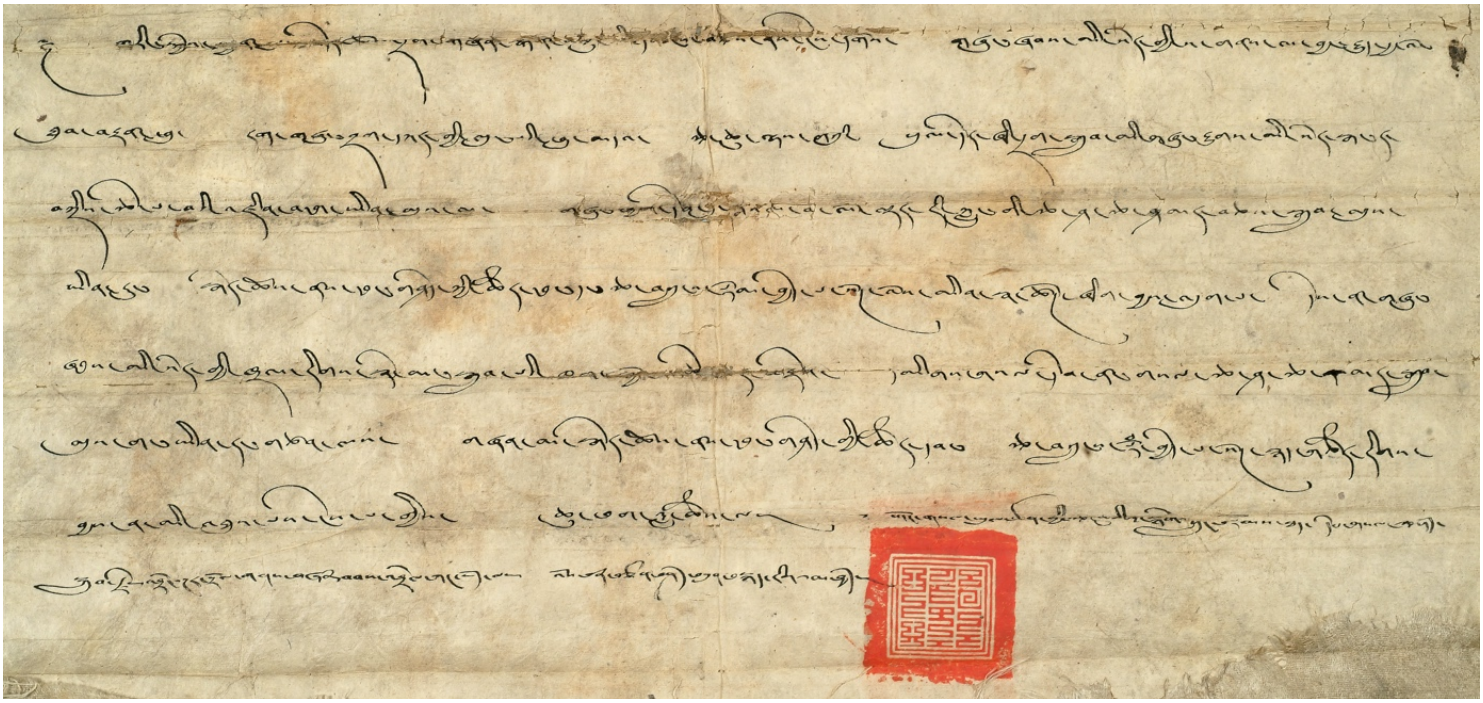
[103] Schuh 1981, 12.

[104] KDL: 012 2-1/#/115/6/4 (ID 2328).

The next seal impression of the Eighth Dalai Lama dates from 1803 (*chu phag*).[105]

4.3 x 4.3 (3.1 x 3.1) cm



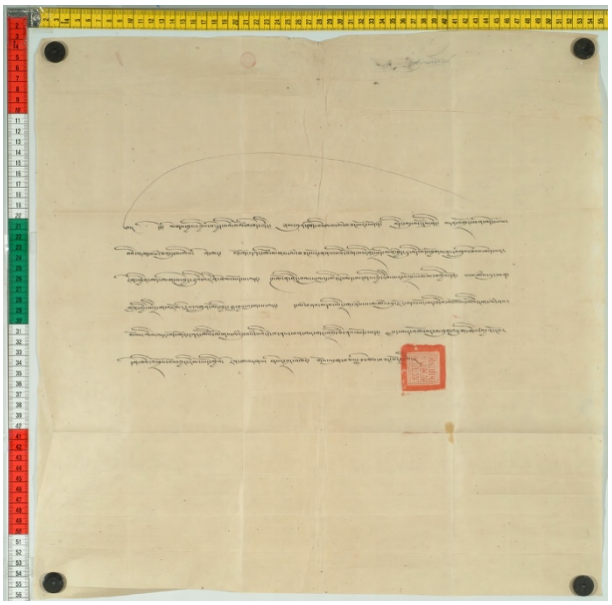


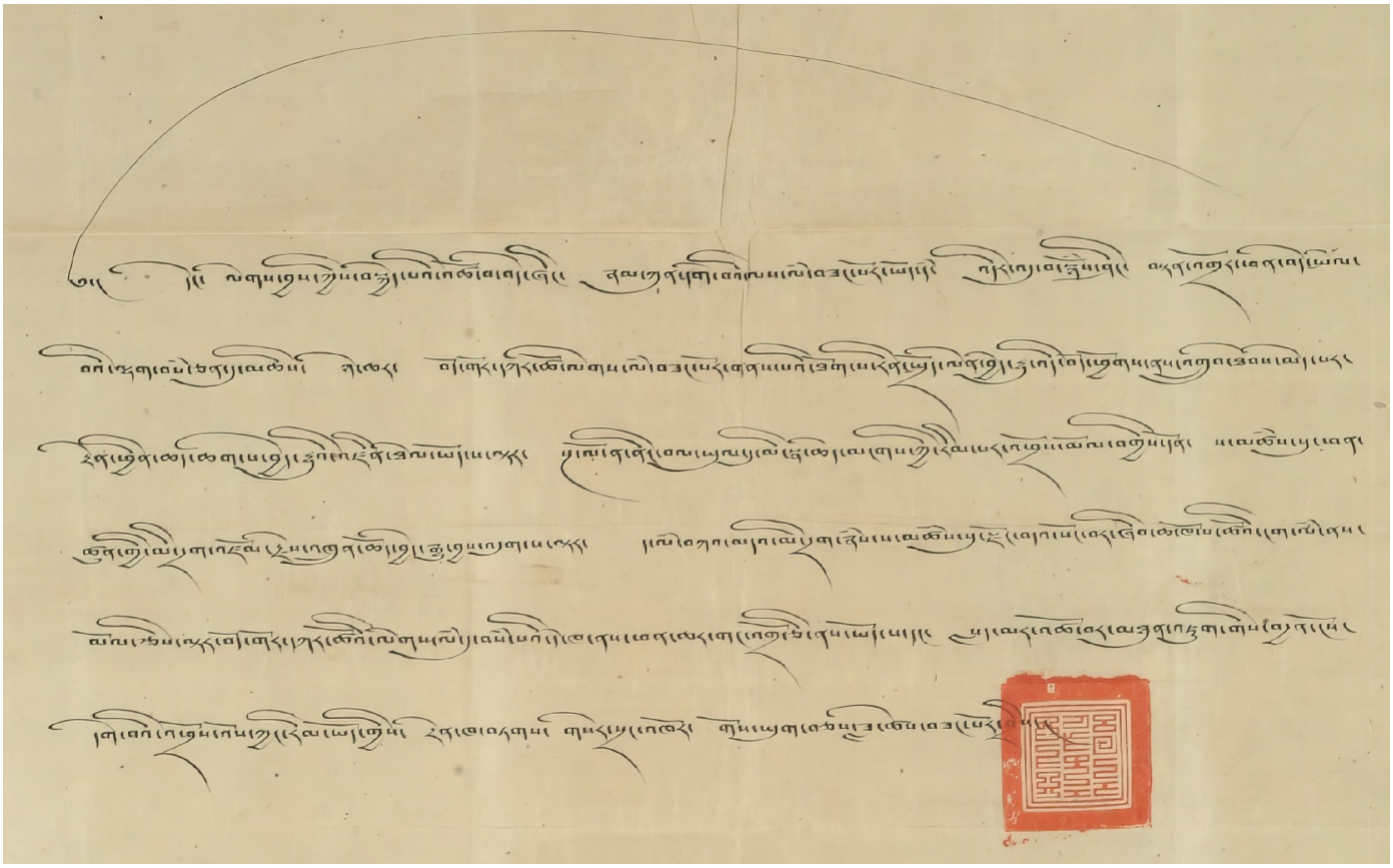
The following seal impression is from an undated document of the Twelfth Dalai Lama 'Phrin las rgya mtsho (1857–1875).[106]

[105] WB: 1653_WB_5.

[106] KHD: 0456_KHD_S109.

4.2 x 4.2 (3.1 x 3.1) cm





The impression of SEAL 25c can also be found on documents of the Seventh Dalai Lama sKal bzang rgya mtsho, the Eleventh Dalai Lama mKhas grub rgya mtsho and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thub bstan rgya mtsho.[107] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei indicate 4.3 x 4.3 cm for the outer edges of the stamp of the younger seal, which was kept in the Nor bu gling ka.[108]

[107] KDL: 012 2-1/#/7/4/4 (ID 1109) (cf. Schwieger 2022, 612—613), KDL: 012 2-1/#/112/8/4 (ID 2300), KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/7/4 (ID 1219), KHD: 0423_KHD_S79.

[108] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 66.

Let us now turn to the seal inscription. In the Journal of the Tibetan Archives, rDo sbis Tshe ring rgyal presents two illustrations of the seal inscription, which not only differ from each other, but also from all impressions on original documents known to me. One illustration can be found on the above-mentioned page of the *bka' shag* seal book. The other is reproduced in rDo sbis Tshe ring rgyal's article in the same journal without any further reference.[109] For comparison, I have placed the seal impression of the above document next to it.

The comparison makes it clear that the reconstructions of the seal books are not necessarily accurate.

According to Schuh, all three columns show an inscription in 'Phags pa script. While all he can say about the first and third columns is that they are not in Tibetan, the middle one supposedly shows the (Sanskrit) word *vajradhara*. Schuh acknowledges that this reading is problematic, as only the first and the last grapheme can be clearly identified as letters of the 'Phags pa script. In the end he considers a reconstruction of the remaining letters of the word to be probable, which assumes styles of writing that are not attested on any other Tibetan seals.[110]

A closer look reveals that his interpretation of the second grapheme as *dzra*[111] is already based on a faulty reconstruction of the grapheme. He reconstructs . However, all seal impressions show an additional vertical line at the top left: . Schuh's interpretation is speculative. It is only supported by the assumption that the information that probably originally comes from the *bka' shag* seal book is correct. However, it cannot be ruled out that the Tibetan sources project something into the inscription that is not there at all. After all, the first known Tibetan seal books were written long after the seal was awarded by Altan Khan to the Third Dalai Lama.

SEAL 26a and SEAL 26b

Apparently, the so-called *Vajradhara* seal was the basis of another seal with a similar pseudo-script, of which there are also apparently at least two versions, one with and another without three white

[109] Daowei·Cairangjia 2011, 112. For yet another variant of the reconstruction of the so-called *vajradhara* seal see Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 35.

[110] Schuh 1981, 11–13.

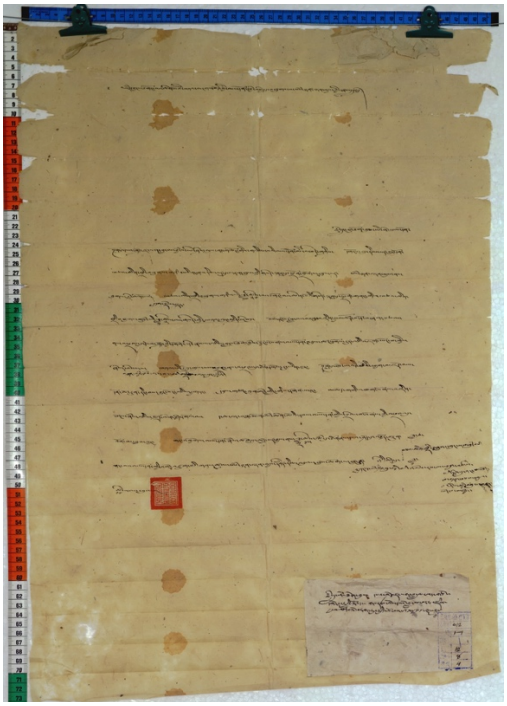
[111] *jra* according to the transliteration scheme used by Schuh.

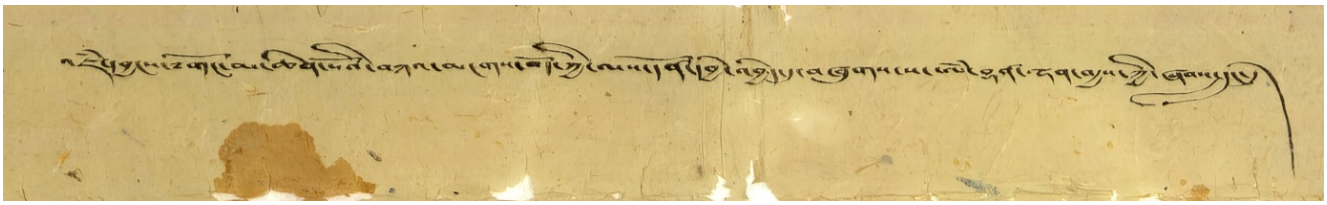
dots in the upper frame. This seal is of much later origin. The impressions known so far are from the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century.

The following impressions are dated from 1798 and 1806.[112]

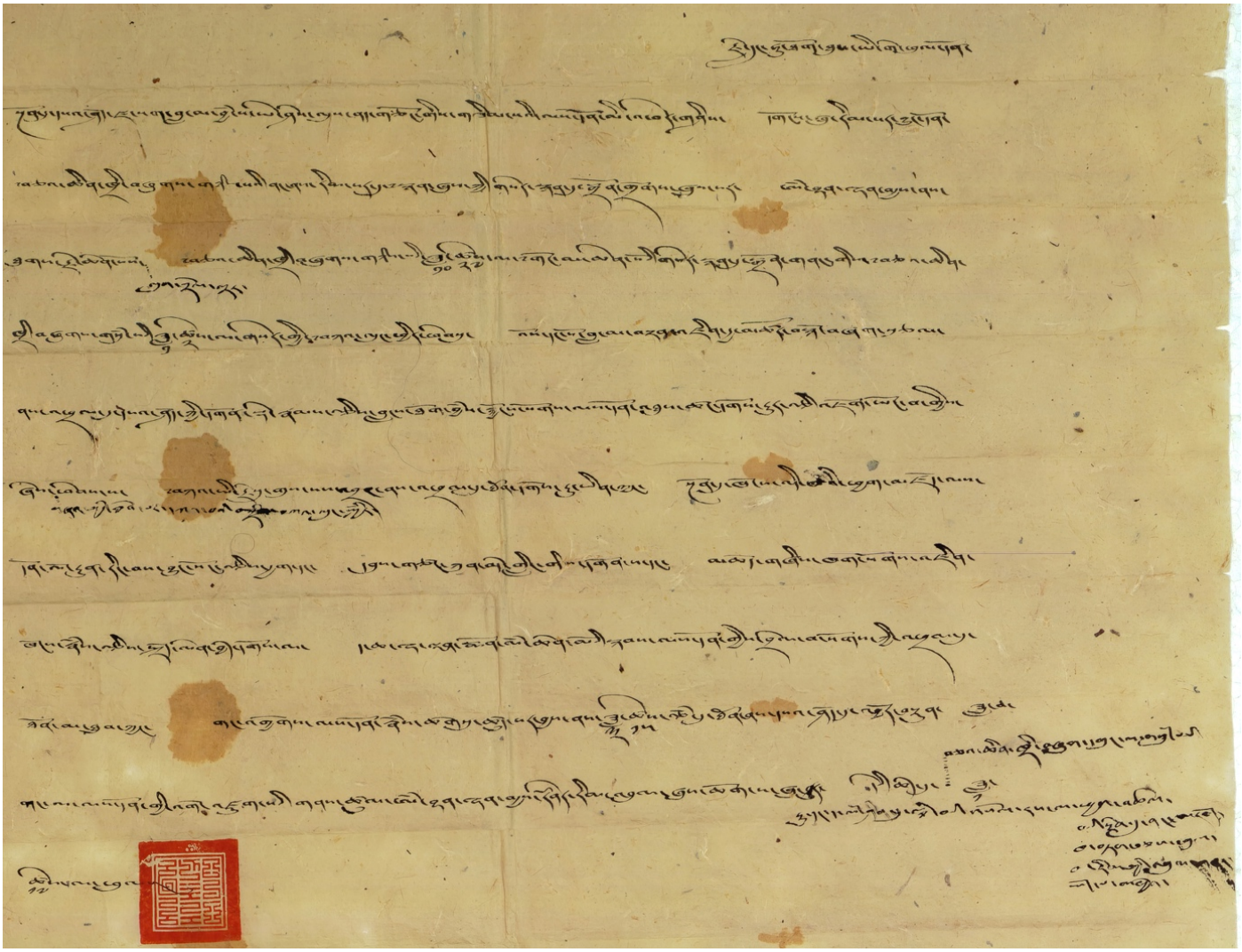
3.4 x 3.4 (2.5 x 2.5) cm

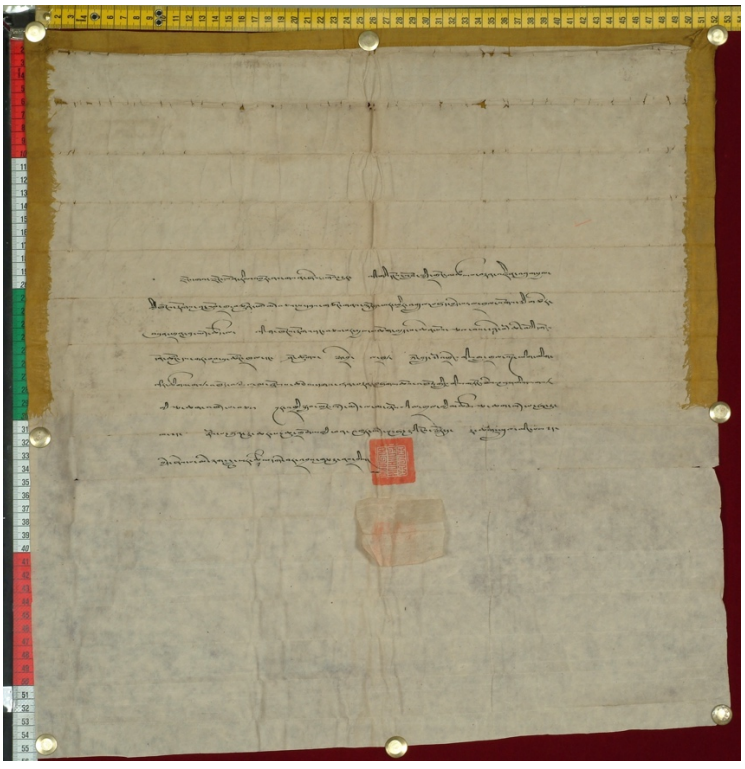
3.3 x 3.5 (2.4 x 2.4) cm

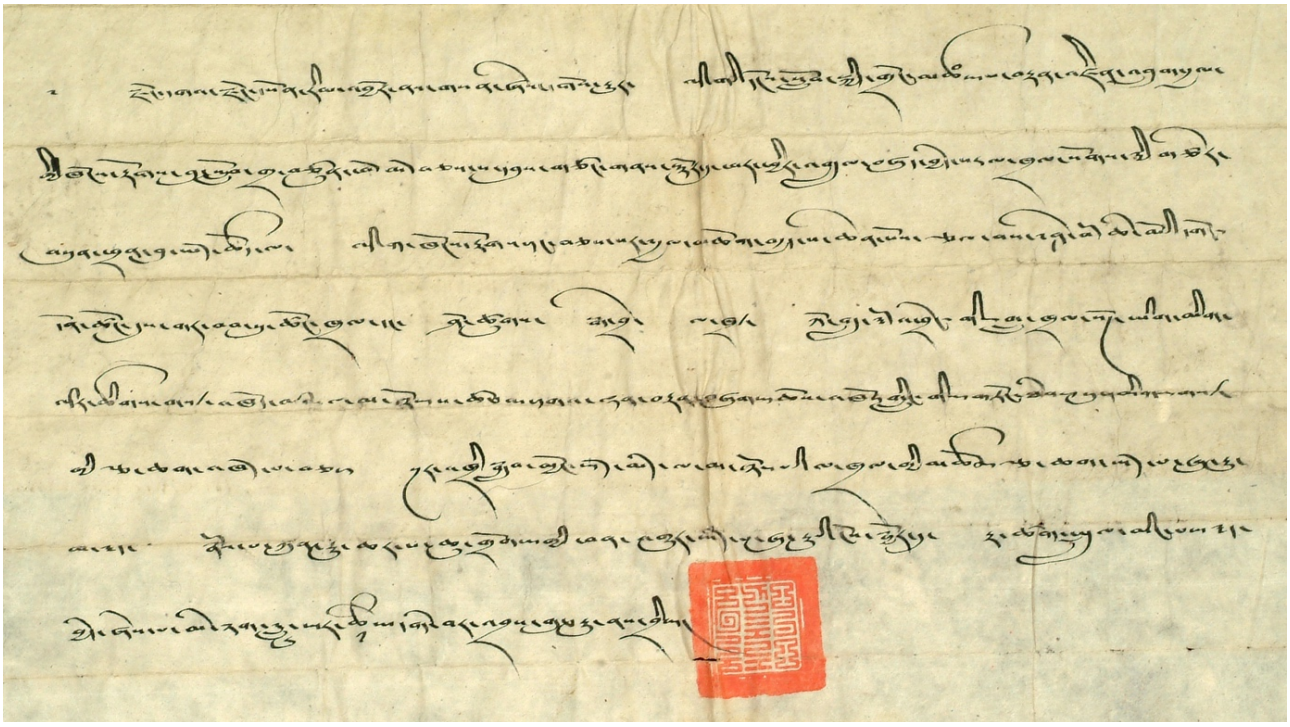




[112] KDL: 012 1-1/#/12/8/4 (ID 119), LTWA: 0811_LTWA_3.

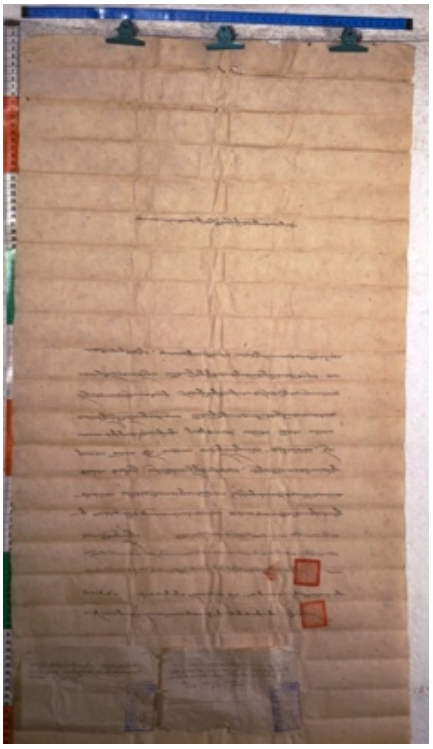






The version with dots in the upper frame is testified for the years 1791, 1798, 1799, 1818, 1837 and 1842.[113] The version without dots is testified for the years 1806, 1830, 1836, 1837 and 1845.[114]

At the bottom of the following document, issued in 1791, we first see the seal impression with three dots.[115] At the end of the confirmation note added below in 1836, we see the version without three dots. However, the second seal impression is upside down. Whether this was accidental or deliberate is unclear.

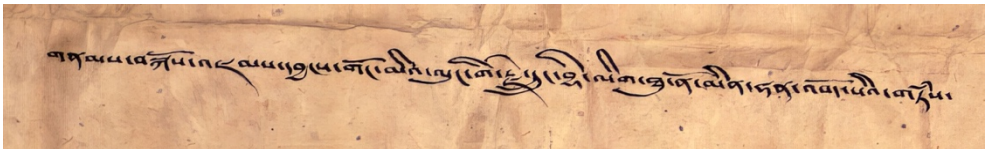


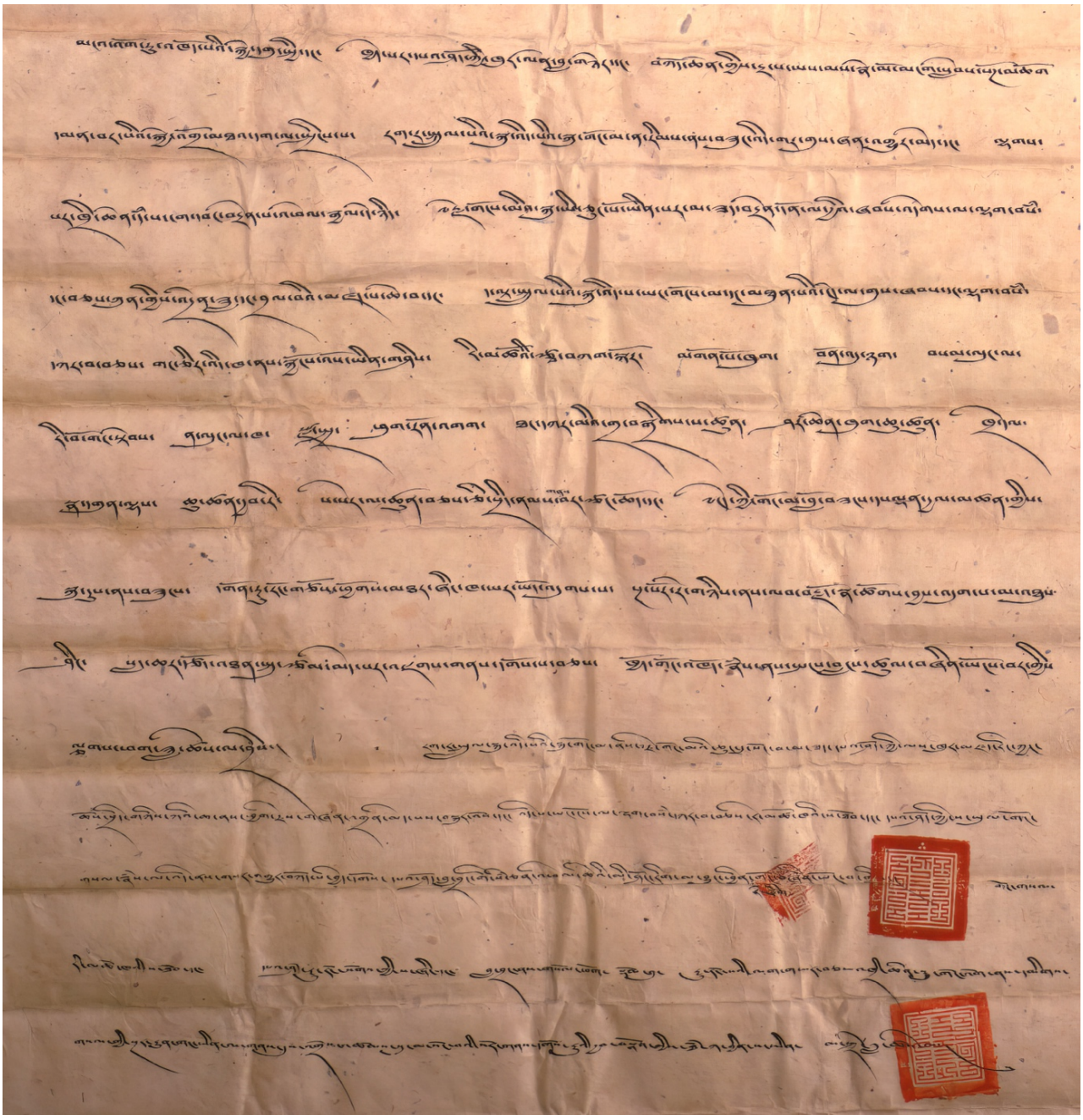
Seal impressions from 1791 and 1836. The upper one measures 3.5 x 3.5 (2.5 x 2.5) cm, the lower one 3.3 x 3.4 (2.5 x 2.5) cm.

[113] KDL: 012 2-1/#/73/10/4 (ID 1871); KDL: 012 1-1/#/12/8/4 (ID 119); 0823_LTWA_15; KDL: 012 2-1/#/62/6/4 (ID 1709); KDL: 012 2-1/#/87/2/4 (ID 2032); KDL: 012 2-1/#/87/9/4 (ID 2039).

[114] 0811_LTWA_3; KDL: 012 2-1/#/91/4/4 (ID 2074); KDL: 012 2-1/#/73/10/4 (ID 1871); KDL: 012 2-1/#/13/7/4 (ID 1169); KDL: 012 2-2/#/12/5/4 (ID 2471).

[115] KDL: 012 2-1/#/73/10/4 (ID 1871).

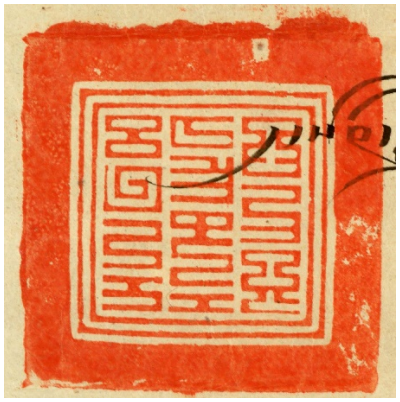




All impressions seem to originate from the Eighth rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa'i mgon po (1760–1810) or the Ninth rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* Ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1811–1848). While the Eighth rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* had served twice as regent (regency 1789–1790, 1791–1810), the Ninth rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* was never chosen for this office. Therefore, I assume that the rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* sealed the documents or the copies of documents in his capacity as the head of the Kun bde gling *bla brang*, whose jurisdiction also included distant estates and monasteries like dPa' shod and bKra shis ljongs.

The steps of how this seal was designed are traceable. The basic step was a horizontal mirroring of the so-called *Vajradhara* seal. Then, apparently a few lines were changed. Except for the top character in the middle column, most of the changes are minimal.

Step 1



Step 2

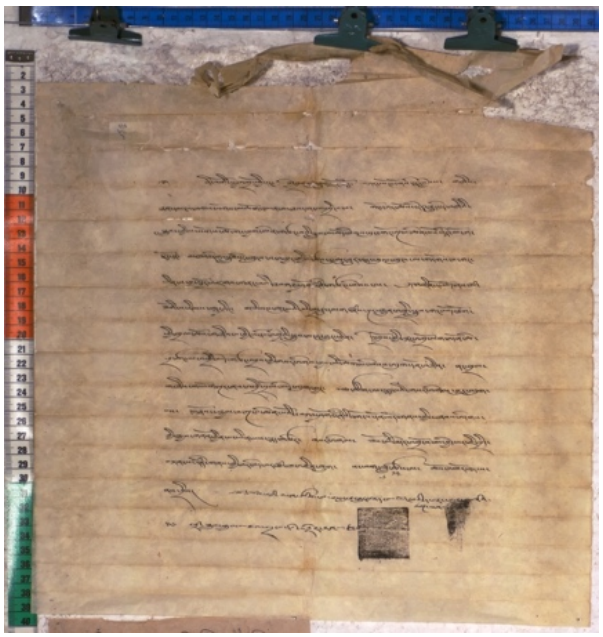
Step 3

Obviously, meaning played no role in the design of the seal in this case either.

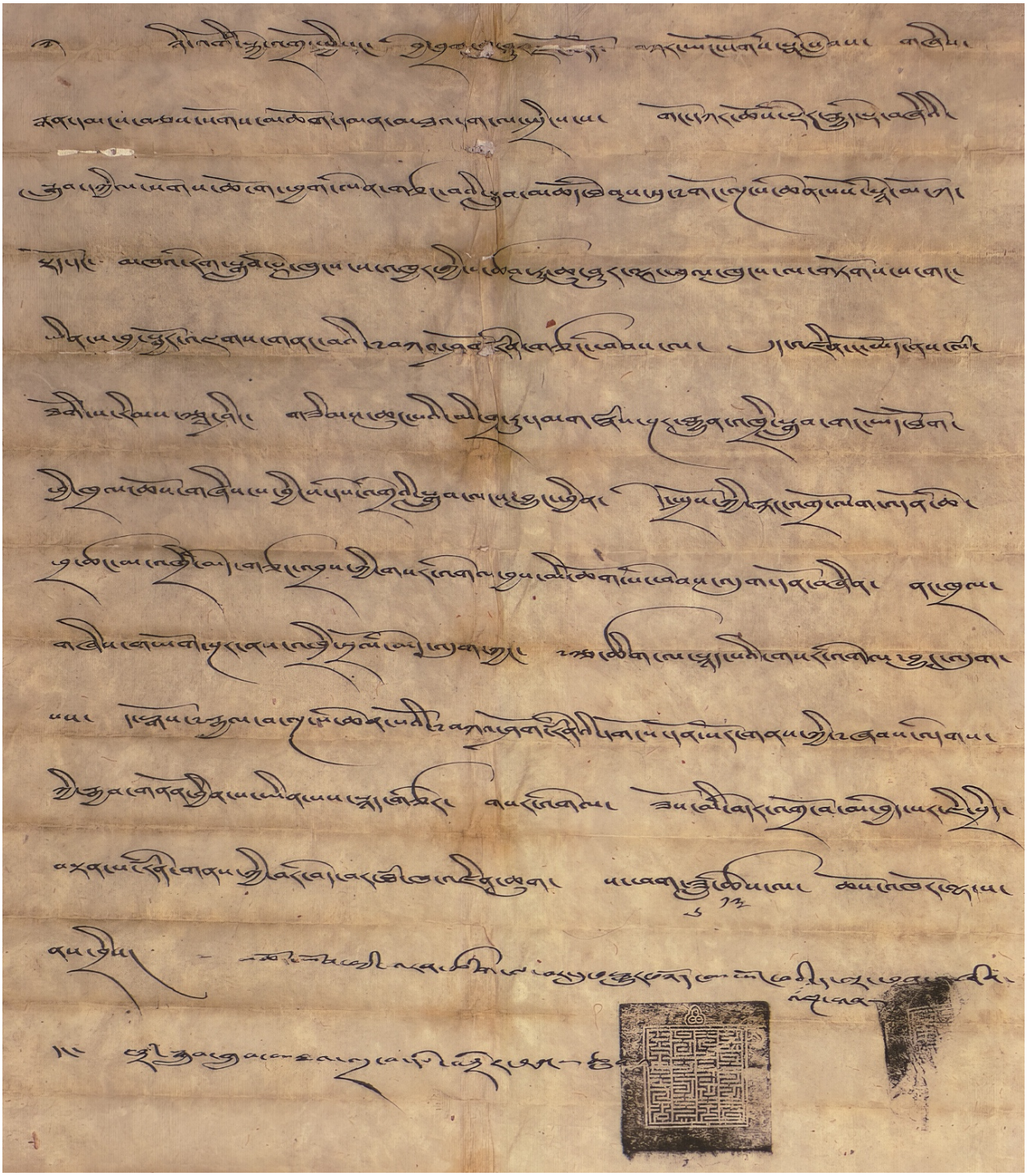
SEAL 27

In my opinion, the inscription on the following impression is also a candidate for a *hor yig brdzus ma*.[116] The impression comes from a document issued in 1719. The corresponding seal belonged to *sde srid* sTag rtse ba alias sKyid shod dGa' ldan *tha'i ji* lHa rgyal rab brtan, head of the Tibetan government during the Dsungar occupation of Central Tibet from 1717 to 1720.

3.5 x 3.5 (2.5 x 2.5) cm



[116] KDL: 012 2-1/#/114/5/4 (ID 2317). Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* presents a rough and inaccurate reproduction of the inscription. Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 53 (corresponds to *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 25r).



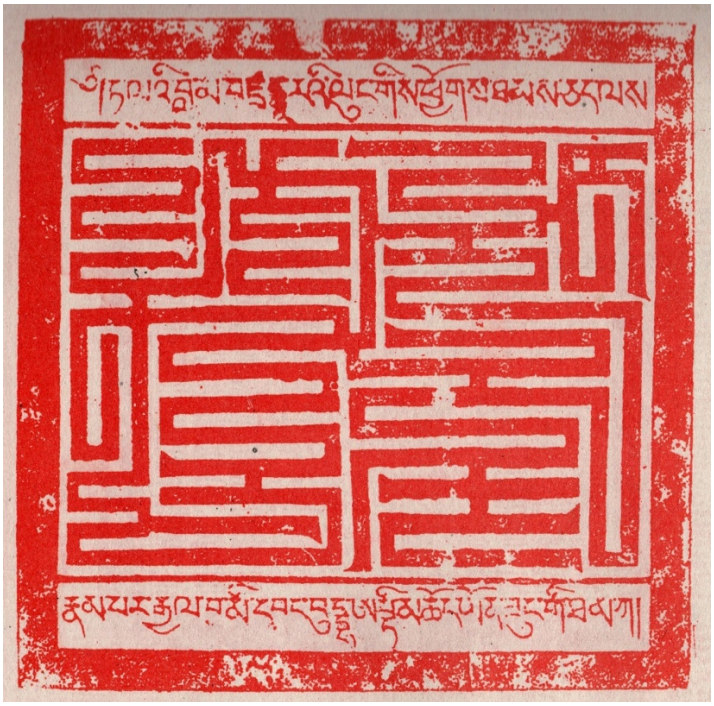
SEAL 28

The following seal impression comes from a seal that was found in the Potala.[117] In addition to a smaller Tibetan *dbu can* inscription at the top and bottom, it has a striking central pattern which, as far as I know at present, is merely a pseudo-script. It is strongly reminiscent of a 'Phags pa script

[117] The image is from Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 63.

influenced by the nine-folded Chinese seal script. Like the seals of the Tibetan regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho presented above (SEAL 18, SEAL 19), which imitate the nine-folded Chinese seal script, the pattern is not clearly divided into different columns due to its interlacing and transverse connecting lines. As far as I know, no documents with an impression of this seal have yet been found.

The Tibetan inscription on the seal reads: *ta la'i bla ma vajradhāra'i* [sic] *lung gis phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba mi dbang buddha apti mchod yon zung gi tham ka/*. It can be translated as "Joint seal of the patron and the priest, who by the order of the Dalai Lama *vajradhara* (is called) the one who is completely victorious over all directions, the lord Buddha apti." Accordingly, this is a joint seal of the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, who often called himself Buddha apti in the colophons of his works, and the Khoshot Khan, i.e. either Dalai Khan or his successor lHa bzang Khan.[118] I am not aware of any other such joint seal. The size of this seal impression is also unusual, with a side length of 16.5 cm. Normally, large seals have a side length of between 12 and 13 cm. It is unclear what this seal was used for.



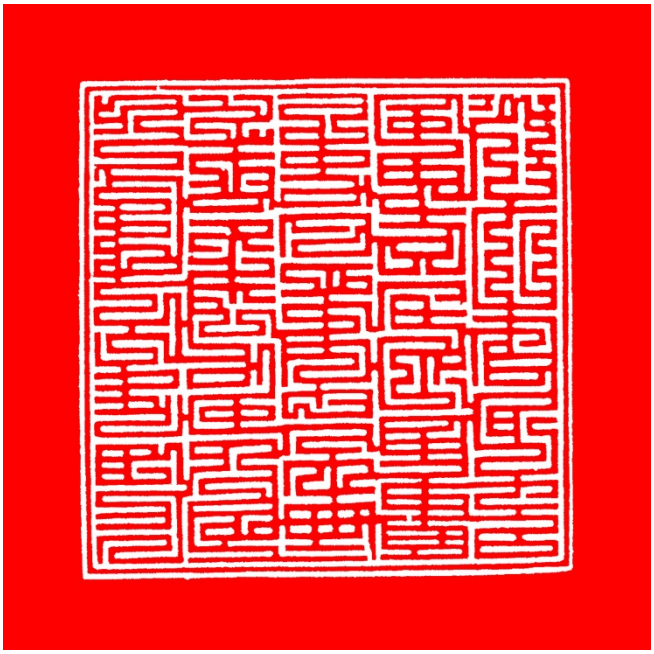
SEAL 29

A similar script-like pattern can be found in the impression of one of Pho lha nas' seals, which became known through black and white images published by E.H. Walsh and Luciano Petech.[119] The

[118] It has already been shown elsewhere that at that time the term *mchod yon* referred to the regent and the Khoshot Khan (Cüppers 2011, 166; Schwieger 2015, 57–58). The name Buddha apti also appears on a trilingual seal of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, which was awarded to him by the emperor (Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 48; Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 67–68).

[119] Walsh 1915b, 470; Petech 1953, illustration opposite p. 210. (Tavola III).

original seal impression is red. The pattern is far less interlaced as in the case of SEAL 28, so that five columns can be clearly distinguished despite the cross-connections.



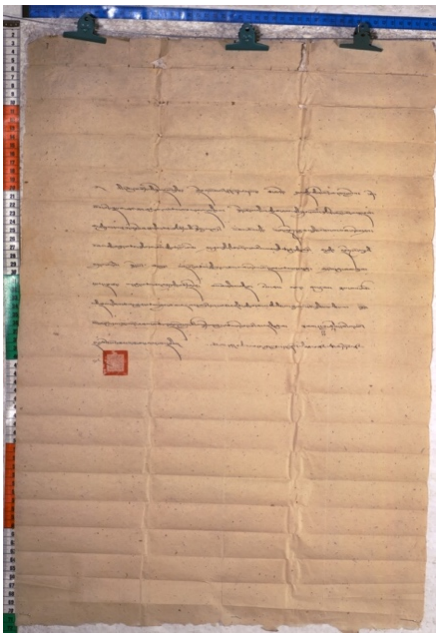
Drawing of SEAL 29

Amy Heller gives the dimensions 11 x 11.3 cm for an impression of the seal.[120]

SEAL 30

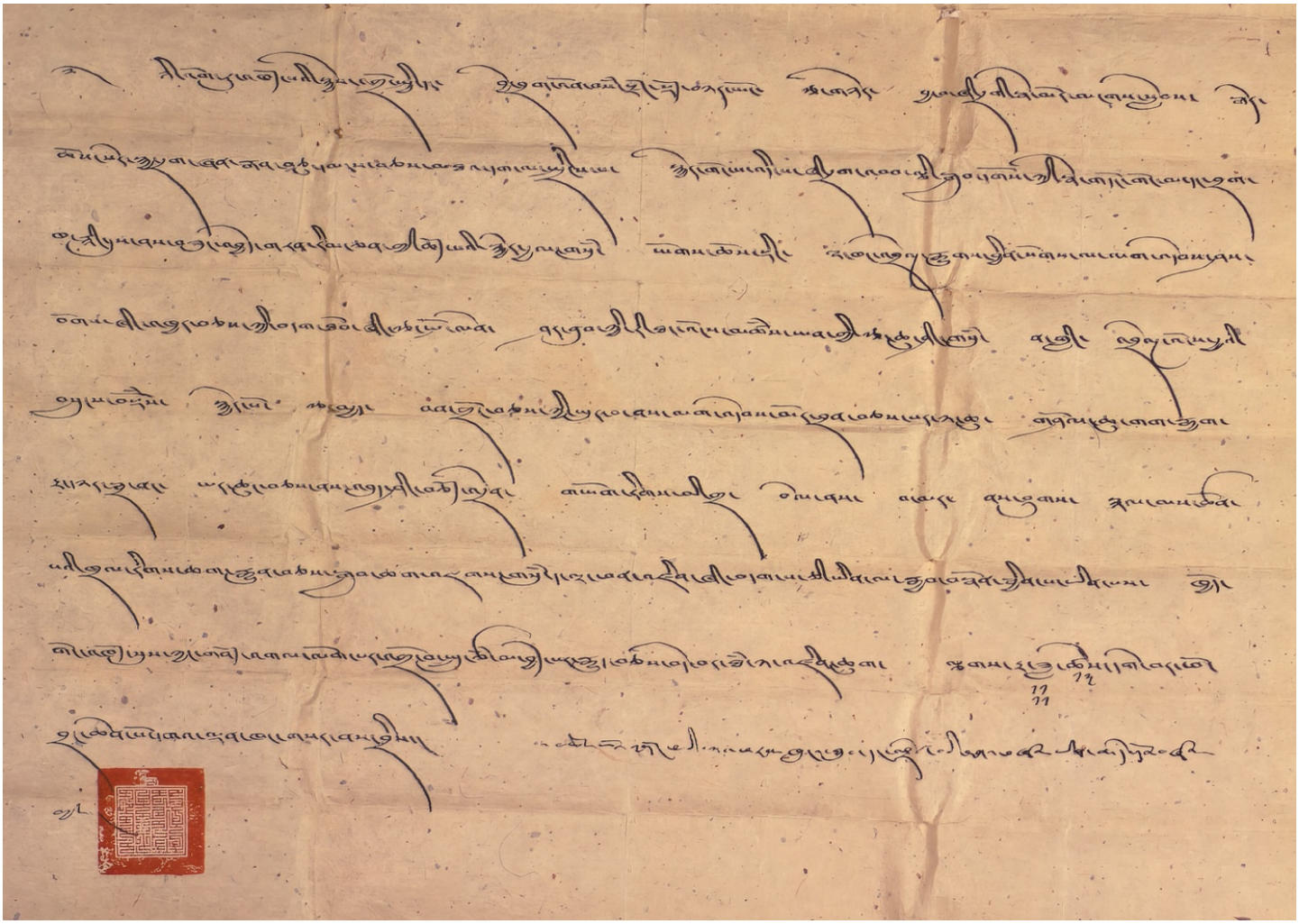
Very similar in style is the pattern of the seal impression depicted below.[121]

3.0 x 3.0 (2.0 x 2.0) cm



[120] Heller 1989, 379.

[121] KDL: 012 2-1/#/68/7/4 (ID 1818 = k1705).



The impression shows four columns of a script-like pattern and the ’Phags pa letter *sa* in the upper edge. It appears on a document that was issued in the dGa’ ldan khang gsar Palace in Lhasa. According to the Tibetan archives, it was issued by *wang* ’Gyur med rnam rgyal in 1750. However, a closer look at the document reveals that the date of issue indicates a second eleventh Tibetan month. Accordingly, the date of issue falls on January 9, 1751. By this time, ’Gyur med rnam rgyal was no longer alive. Schuh therefore concluded that the owner of the seal was Gung paṇḍita alias rDo ring paṇḍita, who had been appointed as administrator by the Dalai Lama after the murder of ’Gyur med rnam rgyal.[122]

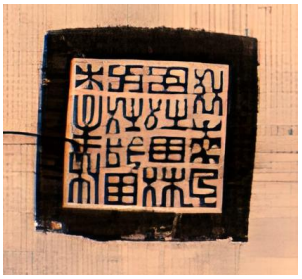
1.3 Looking Somehow Chinese

SEAL 31

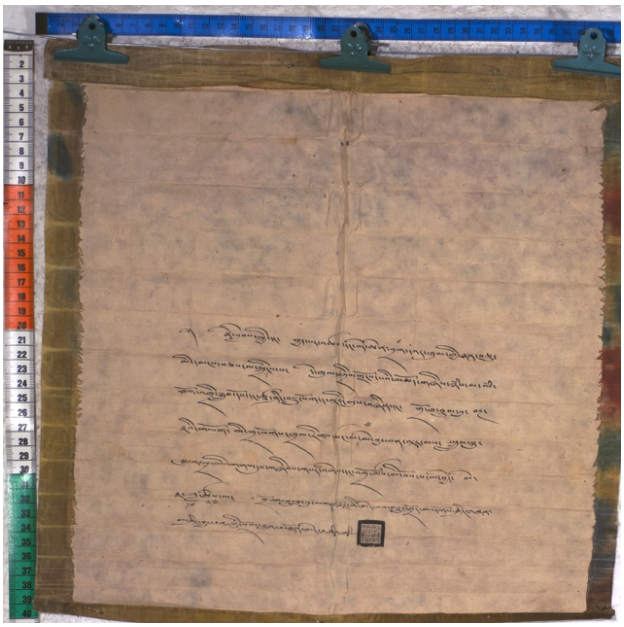
The following seal impression seems to show a pseudo-script that imitates the small Chinese seal script.[123]

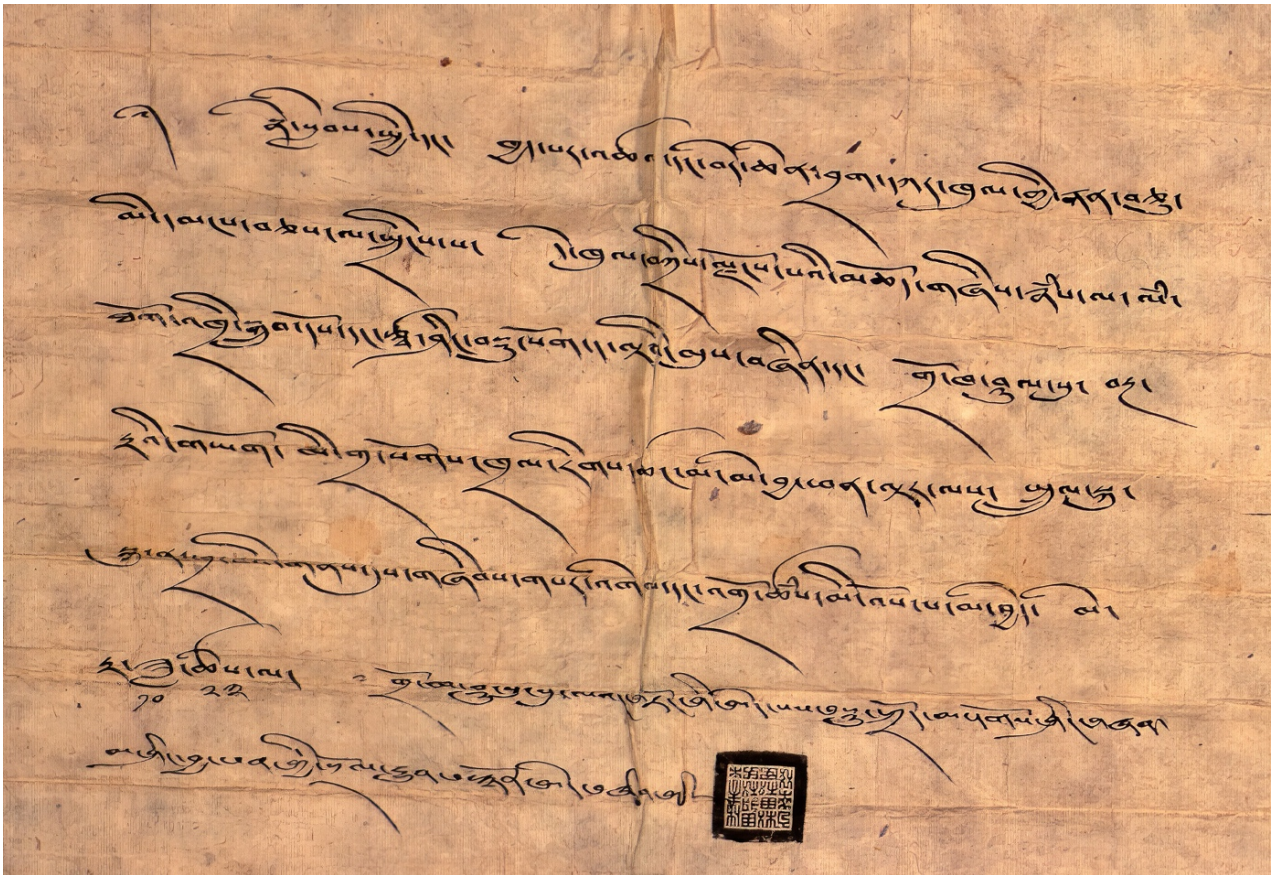
[122] Schuh 2018, 169.

[123] KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/10/4 (ID 1222).



1.9 x 1.9 (1.4 x 1.4) cm





Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, which presents an inaccurate reconstruction of the impression, states that the corresponding seal was used by Nga phod pa rDo rje rgyal po, Lum pa nas bKra shis rgyal po and sByar ra ba for two years (*lo gnyis ring*) from the sixth month of the Fire-Sheep year,[124] corresponding to the period between July 19 and August 16, 1727, onwards. It is known that on August 5, 1727, Khang chen nas bSod nams rgyal po, the leader of

[124] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 56.

the Council of Ministers was murdered by Nga phod pa, Lum pa nas and sByar ra ba.[125] The *Long ba'i dmigs bu* manuscript I have access to, adds the information that the seal was used by them until the fifth month of the Earth-Monkey year, corresponding to the period between June 6 and July 7, 1728.[126] Therefore, "for two years" can only mean "in two calendar years" and not "for the duration of two years". This also fits with the information provided by Petech that the three ministers were executed on November 1, 1728.[127] What does not match at all is the dating of the seal impression at hand. The above impression is from a document dated the 23rd day of the 10th month of the Fire-Horse year corresponding to December 16, 1726.

At that time, Tibet was still governed by a council of ministers led by Khang chen nas. So far, only impressions of another seal of them with an inscription in 'Phags pa letters are known (SEAL 74). That seal was used by them at least until March 1726. It is currently not possible to say whether the seal discussed here is the one that according to Petech was given to Khang chen nas in the second half of 1726 by the Dalai Lama. The emperor's seal of office was not granted to him until January 18, 1727.[128] However, the imperial document appointing Khang chen nas as leader of the Tibetan government and Nga phod pa as his assistant had already been issued in February 1726.[129] In any case, the seal of the impression shown here was already in use before the assassination of the Prime Minister.

SEAL 32a, b, c, d

It is remarkable that this seal apparently experienced a kind of rebirth later. Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei present impressions of four seals, all showing the same inscription that according to them were used after 1750 by the four ministers of the newly established Council of Ministers, the *bka' shag*.[130] While the earlier impression of SEAL 31 has a side-length of 1.9 cm, the later seals measure 2.0 x 2.0 cm. In addition, there are small differences that confirm that we are not dealing with impressions of one and the same seal. The main difference, however, is that the later seal was apparently rotated by 180 degrees. For comparison, SEAL 32 and SEAL 31 are shown here side by side in the same orientation. Please note that the red color of the younger impression does not necessarily correspond to the actual color used, as all seal impressions are shown in red in Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei's book.

[125] Petech 1972, 115.

[126] *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 25v.

[127] Petech 1972, 148–149.

[128] Petech 1972, 109.

[129] Schwieger 2015, 139–141.

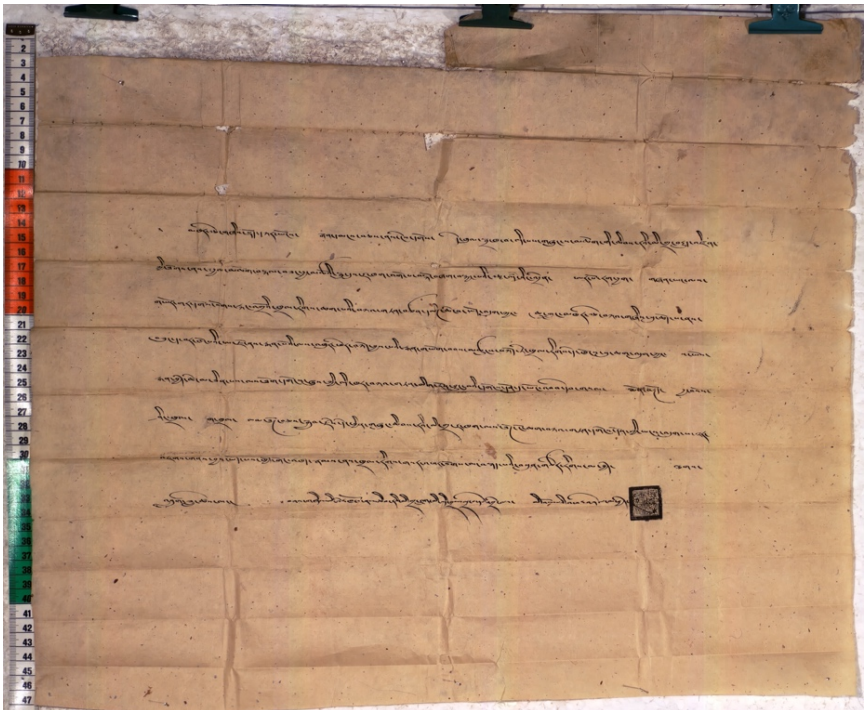
[130] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 74.

I can't say whether the 180-degree rotation corresponds to the actual use of the seal. So far, documents that show such a seal impression are not known to me. Although at first glance the inscription appears to contain a few characters of the small Chinese seal script, Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei were apparently unable to discern any meaning. For all four seals of the four ministers, they provide the same information. Accordingly, the seals were made of copper and have a height of 5 cm. They were preserved in the Potala.

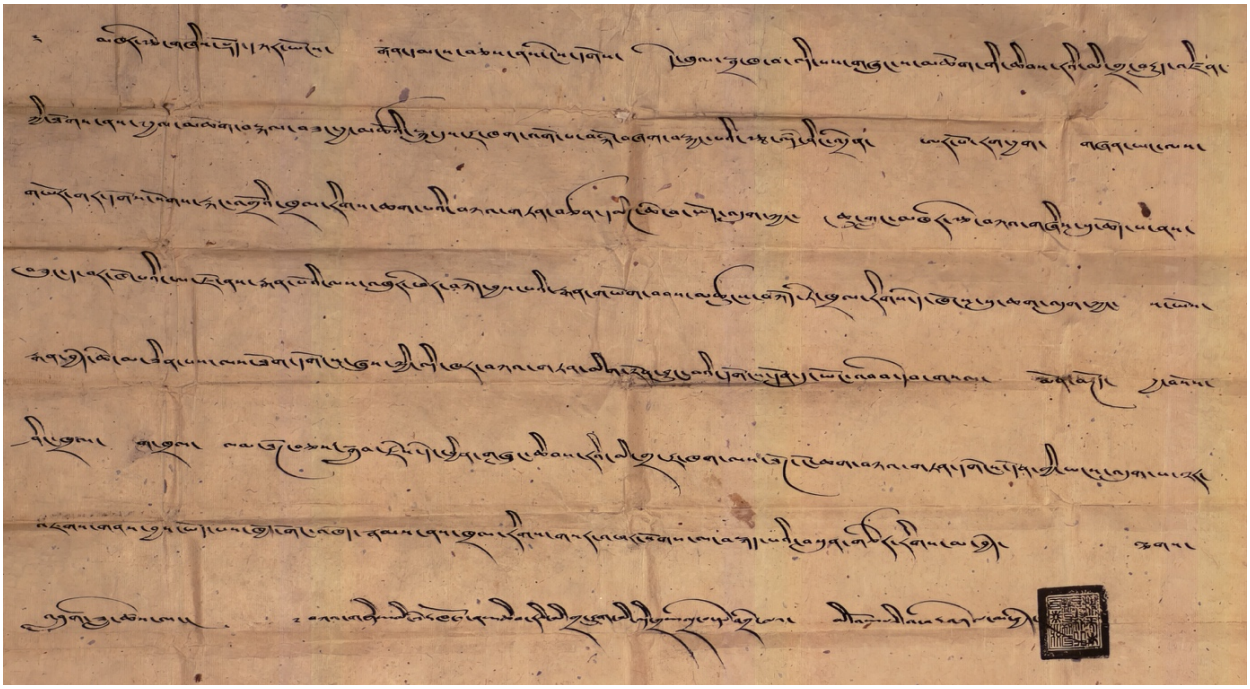
SEAL 33

Probably, the same seal was later taken once more as a model for yet another seal of an unknown seal owner. It certificates a document of an unknown issuer that the Tibetan Archives dated 1820 (*lcags 'brug*).[131] For comparison, the upside-down impression of SEAL 31 is shown again to the right.

2.4 x 2.4 (1.8 x 1.8) cm



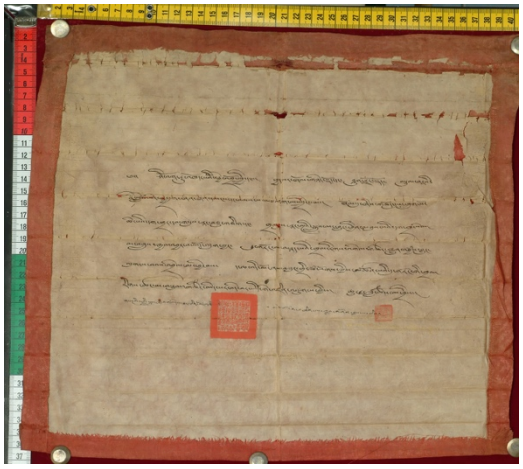
[131] KDL: 012 2-1/#/81/6/4 (ID 1975).



SEAL 34

There are several tiny seal impressions from the early dGa' ldan pho brang period, all of which have a script-like pattern that some mistakenly believe to be a form of Chinese writing. They all belong to the so-called *sel tham* or *sel dam* seals. Schuh received verbal information that such seals were used to authenticate documents of lesser importance, e.g. territorial division agreements (*'byed khra*).[132] rDo sbis Tshe ring rgyal explained the name of the seals by their function. Accordingly, they were stamped on receipts, promissory bills, tax debt certificates, etc. to indicate that the debts had been settled and that the documents in question were now invalid.[133] Originally, this may well have been the only function of this type of seal. However, impressions of this type of seal are also frequently found at the end of short confirmation notes (*rgyab gnon*). This applies, for example, to the following seal impression.[134]

1.5 x 1.4 (1.2 x 1.2) cm

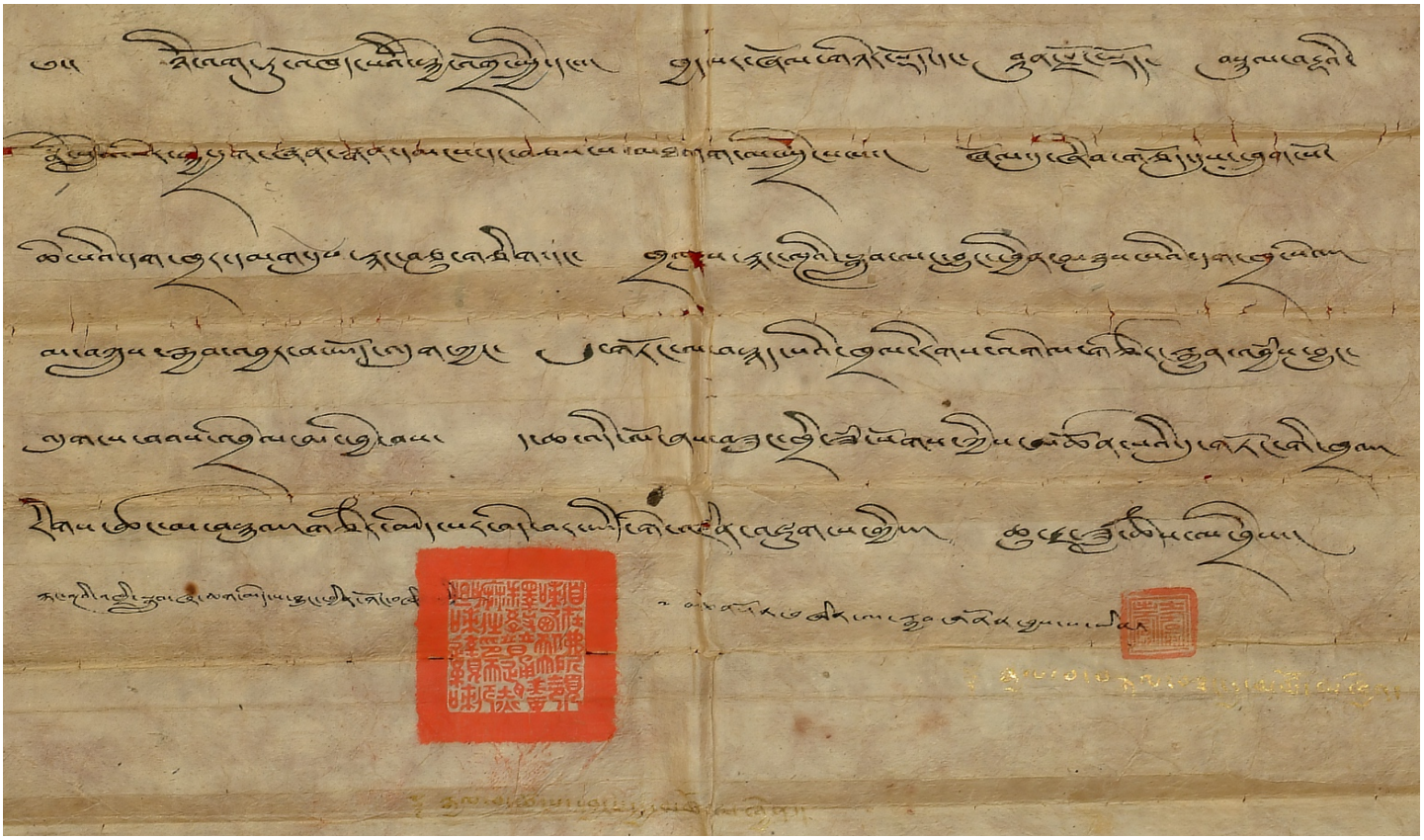


[132] Schuh 1981, 14–15.

[133] Daowei Cairangjia 2011, 107.

[134] LTWA: 0874_LTWA_53.

Schuh assumed that the seal impression originates from lHa bzang Khan. However, a careful look at the document itself reveals that the name of the Seventh Dalai Lama sKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–1757) was written in gold letters below the seal impression as the seal owner. The same applies to the name of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683–1706), the issuer of the actual document, whose name was also written in gold letters below the impression of his seal, the well-known *rtsi rtsi pha'o* seal.[135]

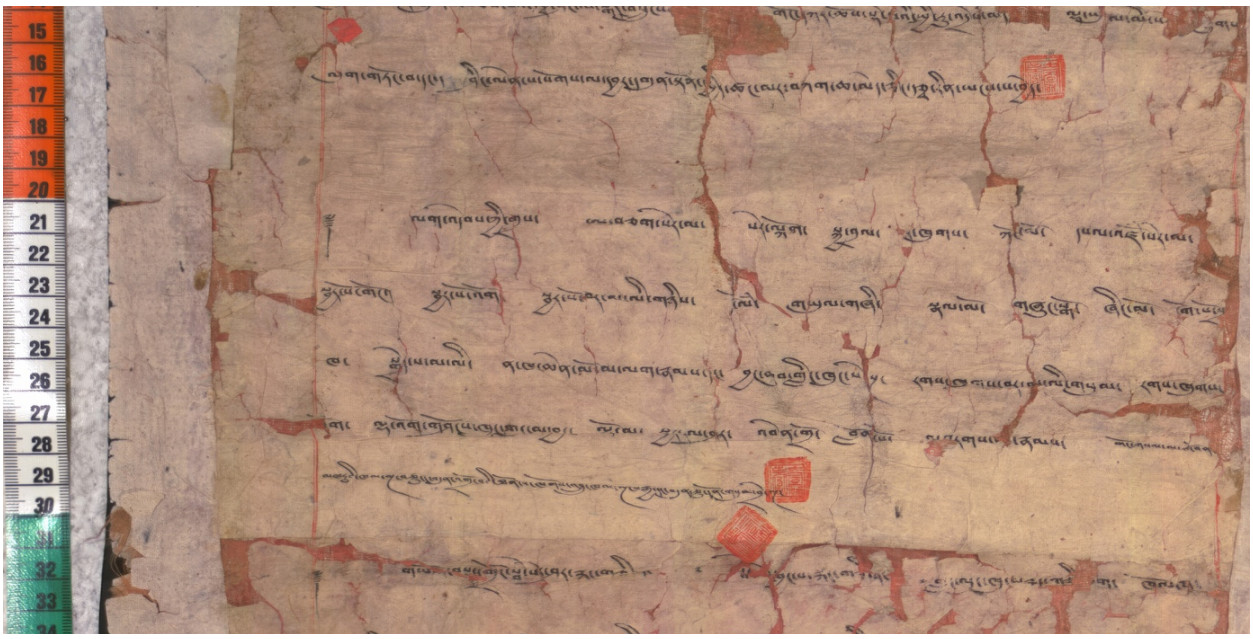


[135] For an analysis of the so-called *rtsi rtsi pha'o* seal see Schwieger 2022, 602.

In another function, impressions of the same seal appear on an incompletely preserved document, described by the archive as a land division agreement (*'byed khra*) from 1681.[136] Neither piece of information is immediately evident from the existing text. What is immediately apparent, however, is that the seal was stamped in numerous places in the text in order to mark listed levies as having been made.

1.3 x 1.3 (1.2 x 1.2) cm

[136] KDL: 012 2-1/#/29/4/4 (ID 1325).



Enlarged images of the document can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 271—283.

Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* contains a rough tracing of the seal impression and describes the seal as *sel dam* of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[137] rDo sbis Tshe ring rgyal presents a better tracing of the impression, which he copied either from the seal book of the *bka' shag* or the seal book of the *yig tshang*.[138] He as well lists the seal among the seals of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The tracing differs slightly from the original seal impressions presented above.

SEAL 35

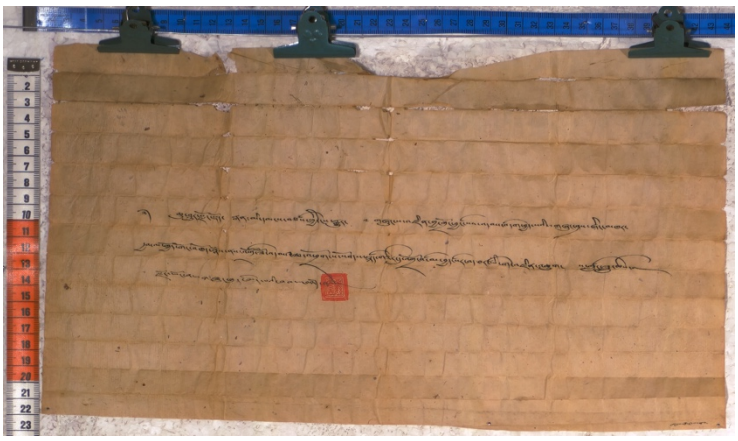
SEAL 35 is the first of two *sel dam* seals that can undoubtedly be assigned to lHa bzang Khan. Impressions of four documents were selected here. The first document was issued in 1709 (*sa glang*).[139]

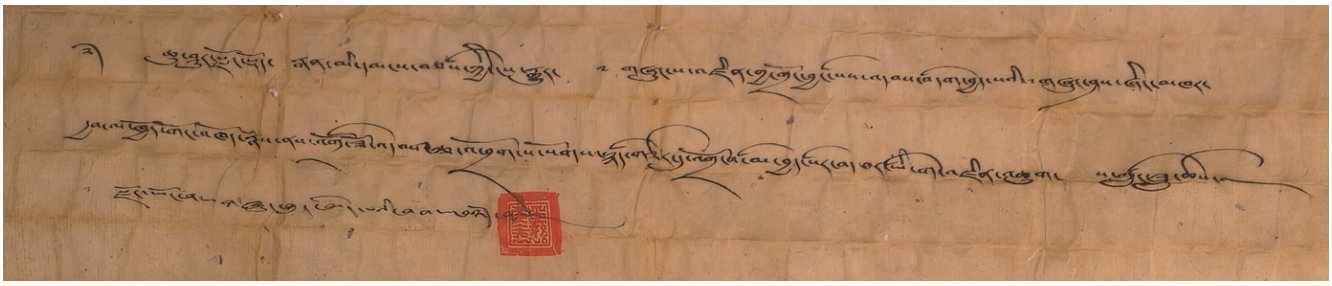
[137] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 36.

[138] Daowei·Cairangjia 2011, 105, gives no reference for the image but mentions both seal books in his bibliography.

[139] KDL: 012 2-1/#/114/3/4 (ID 2315).

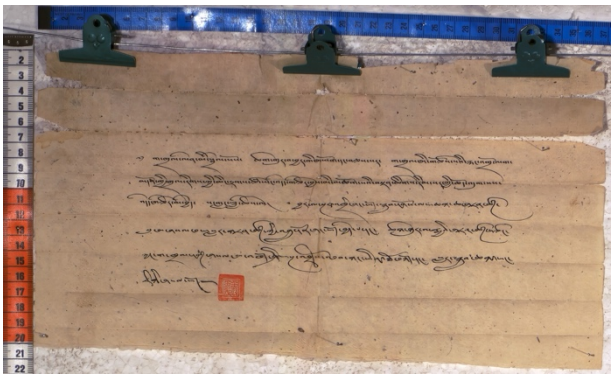
1.6 x 1.6 (1.2 x 1.2) cm

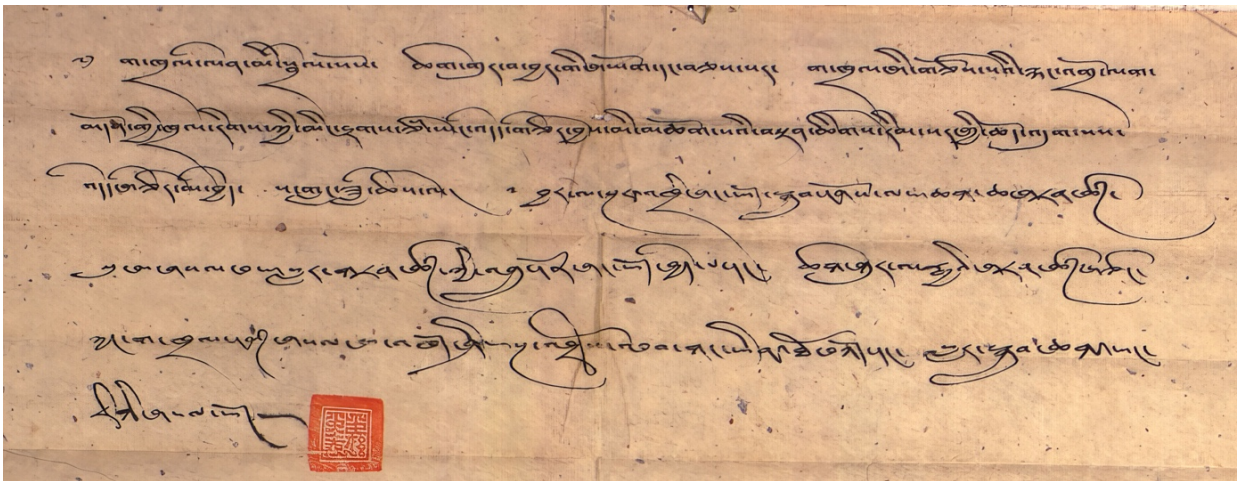




The second document was also issued in 1709 (*sa glang*).[140]

1.6 x 1.6 (1.2 x 1.2)

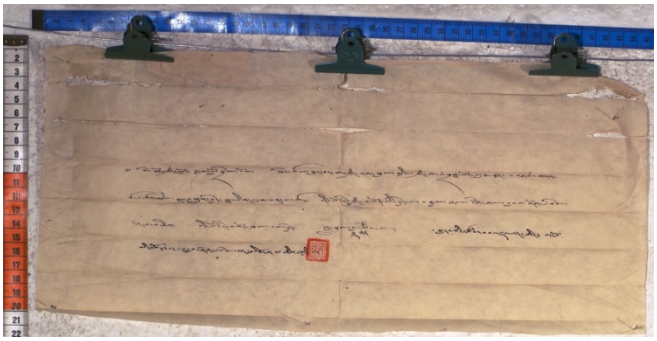


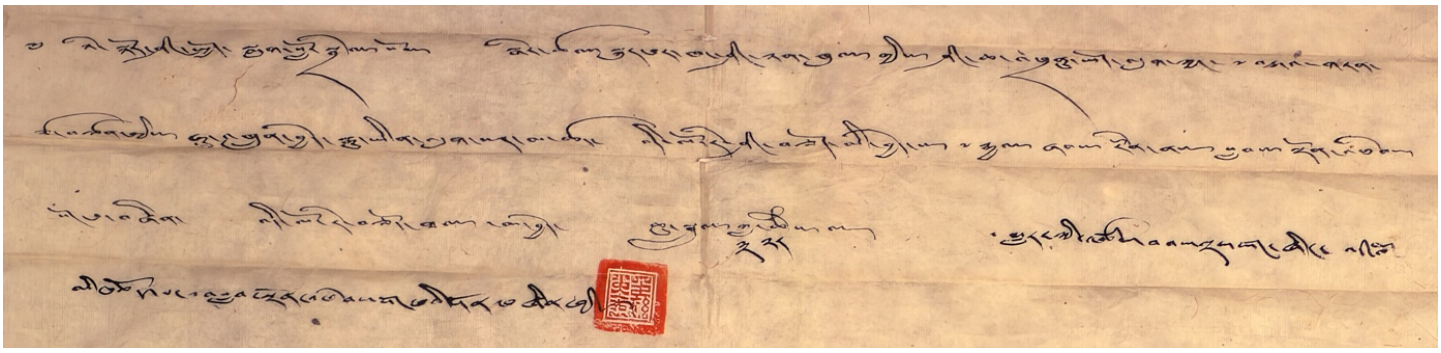


[140] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/9/4 (ID 1722).

The third document dates from 1713 (*chu sbrul*).[141]

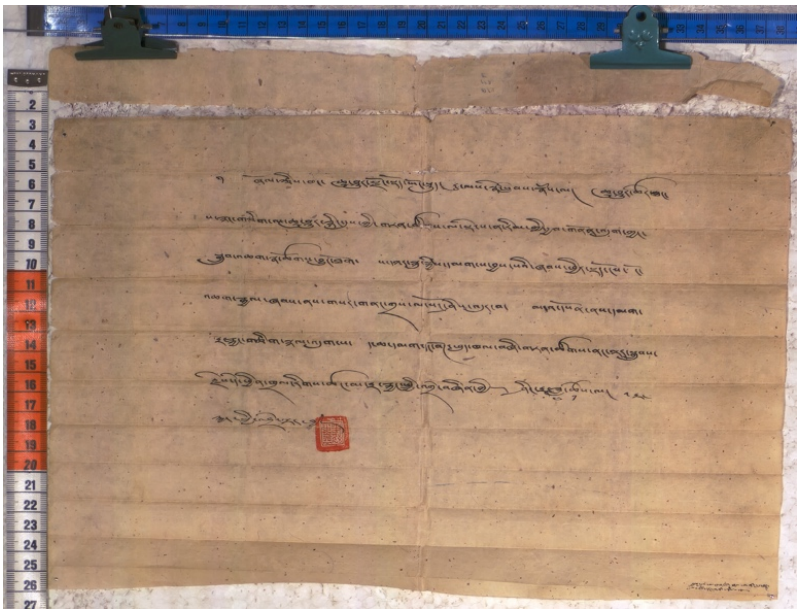
1.7 x 1.7 (1.2 x 1.2) cm





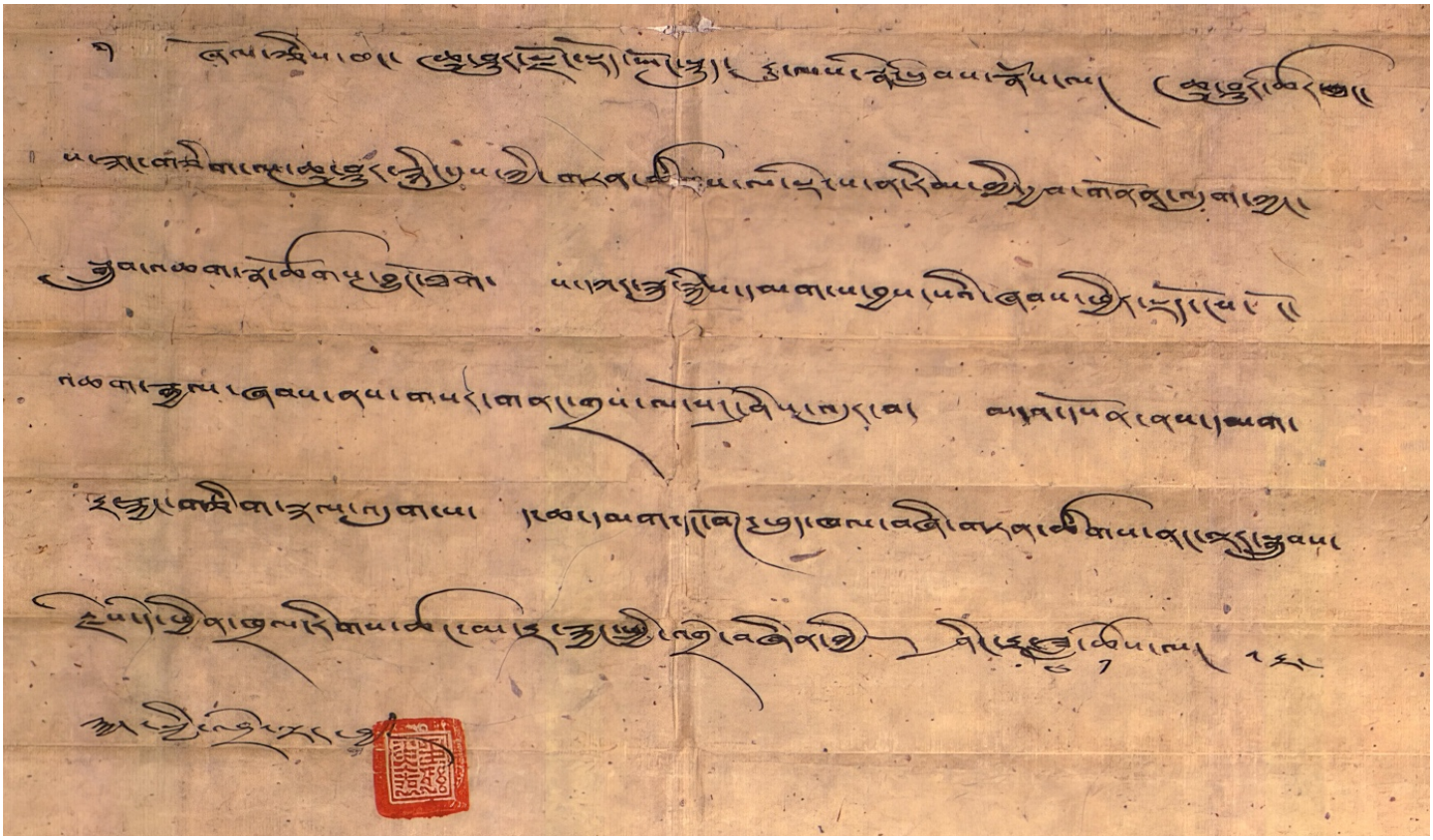
The fourth document is from 1714 (*shing rta*).[142]

1.6 x 1.7 (1.1 x 1.2) cm



[141] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/15/4 (ID 1728).

[142] KDL: 012 2-1/#/112/4/4 (ID 2296).



Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* contains a rough tracing of the seal impression and describes the seal as *sel dam* of lHa bzang Khan.[143]

SEAL 36

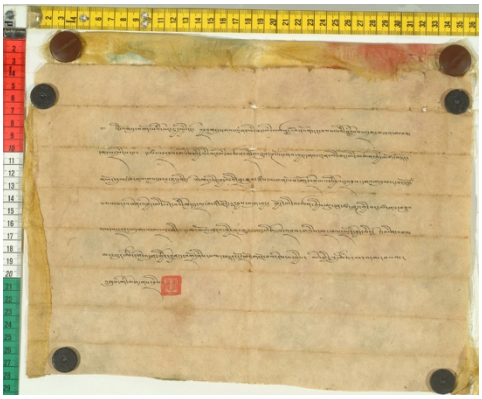
The second *sel dam* of lHa bzang Khan appears on three documents known to me, an impression from 1706 (*me khyi*), one from 1709 (*sa glang*) and one from 1716 (*me spre*).[144] For incomprehensible reasons, Schuh dated the first impression 1646 and attributed it to Gushri Khan, the second 1729 and attributed it to Pho lha nas, and only the third one to lHa bzang Khan.[145] I cannot rule out a placement of the first impression in the 11th *rab byung*, but the text itself provides no indication of this. I therefore assume that in all three cases the same seal owner was involved. This is also suggested by my dimensions, which differ from Schuh's figures.

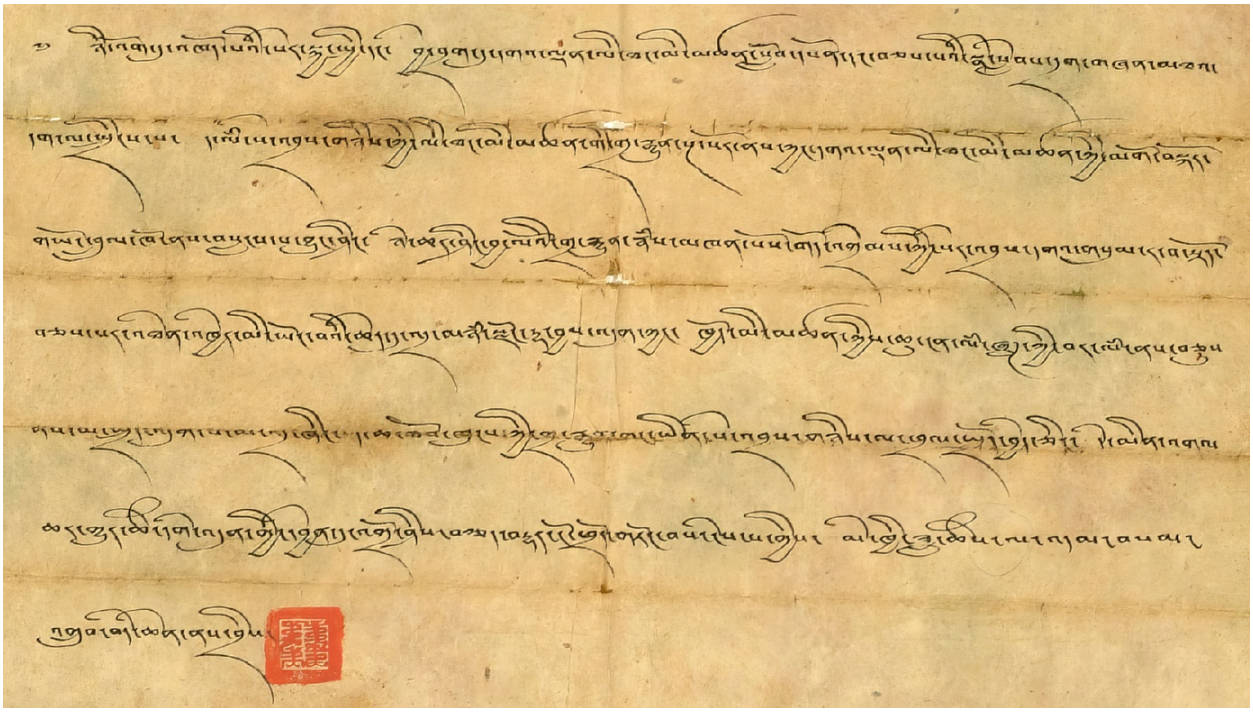
[143] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 52.

[144] AA: 0791_AA_2_1_159; LTWA: 0956_LTWA_168; KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/2/4 (ID 1116).

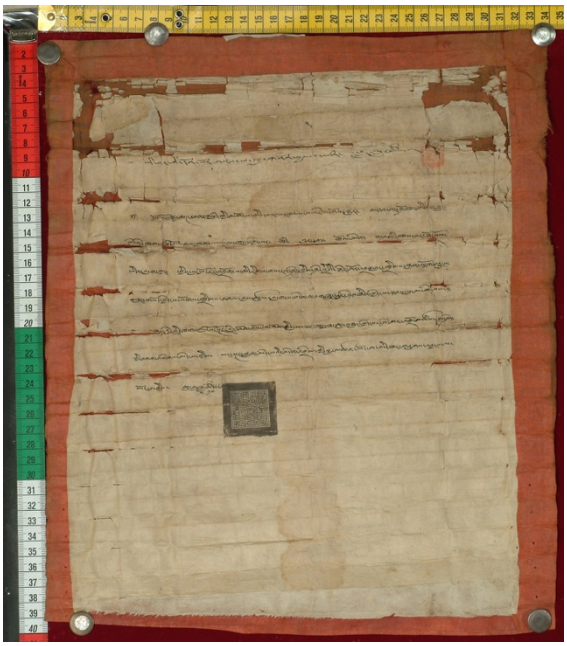
[145] Schuh (2018, 159) accidentally converted *sa glang* to 1729 and assumed that the seal impression originates from Pho lha nas. However, *sa glang* refers to 1709. 1729 would be *sa bya*. 1709 falls within the reign of lHa bzang Khan.

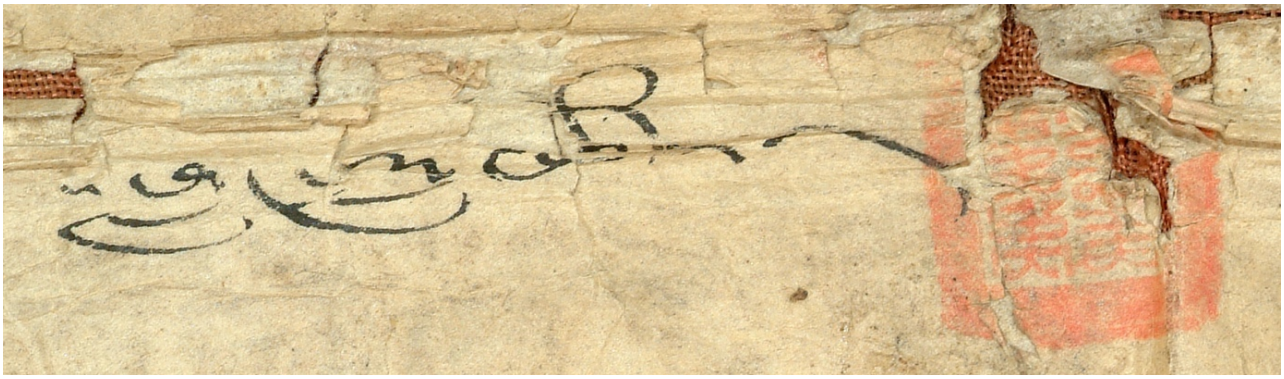
Seal impression from 1706,
1.5 x 1.5 (1.1 x 1.1) cm

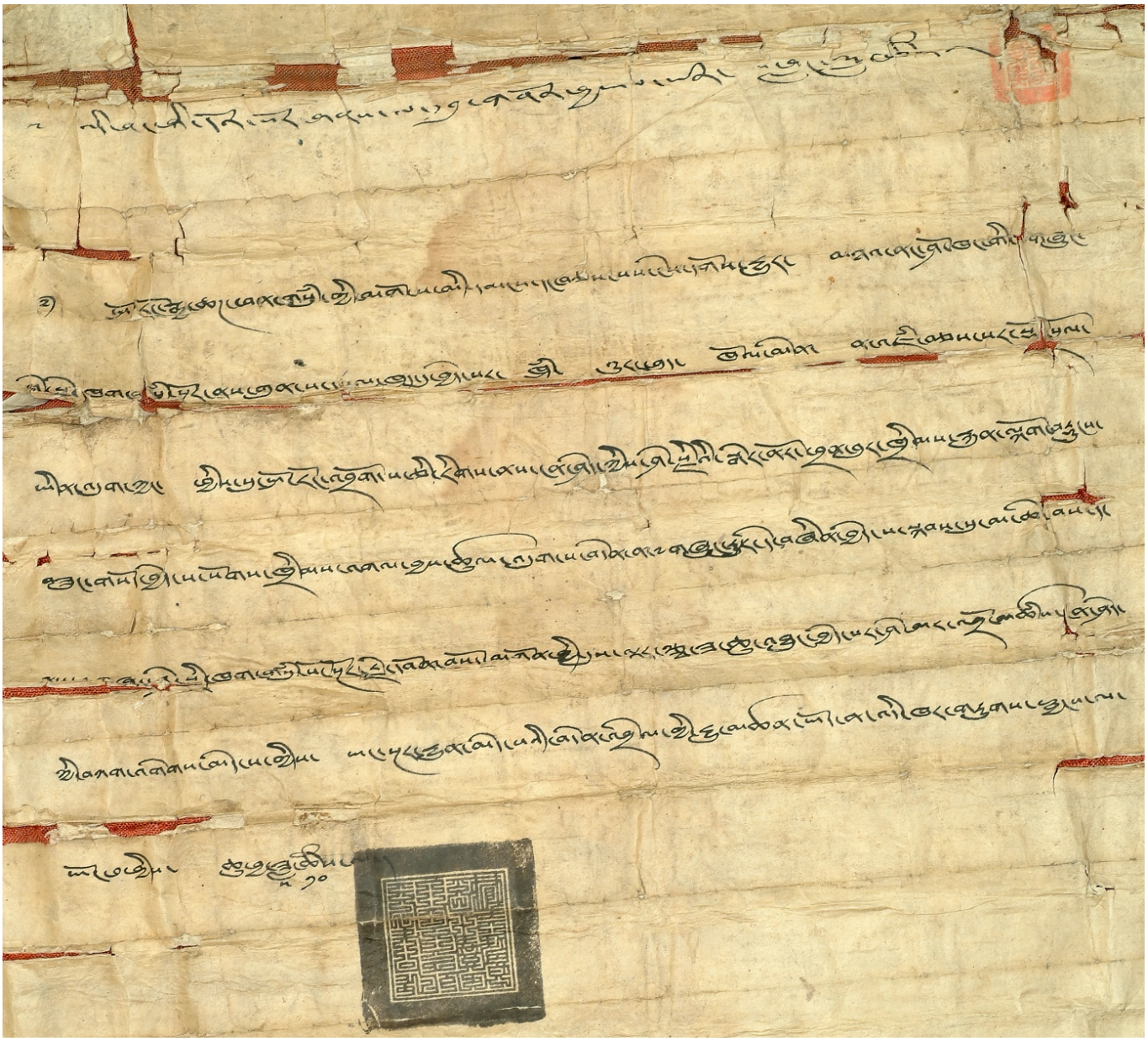




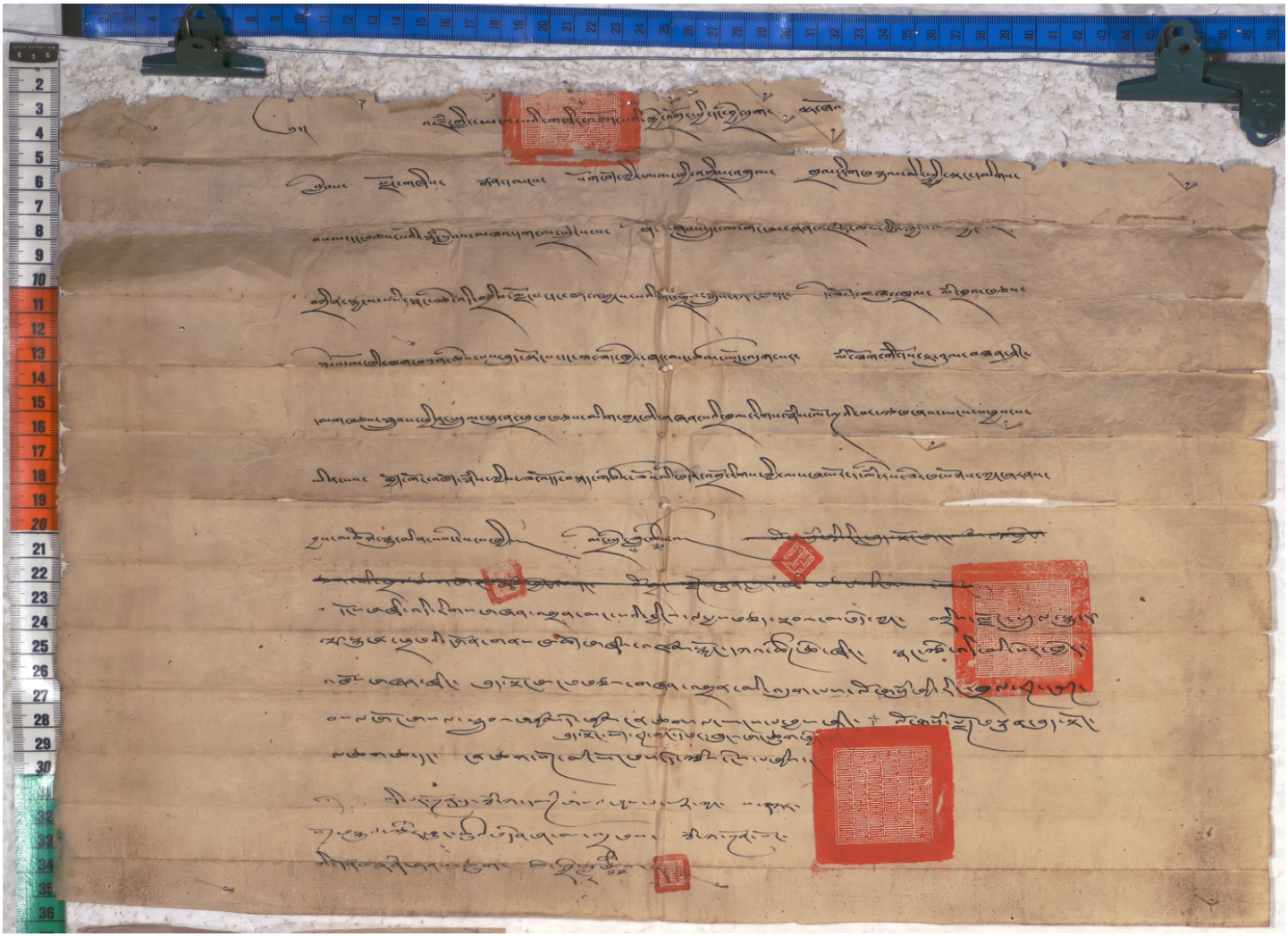
Seal impression from 1709,
1.5 x ? cm







Seal impression from 1716,
1.5 x 1.5 (1.0 x 1.0) cm

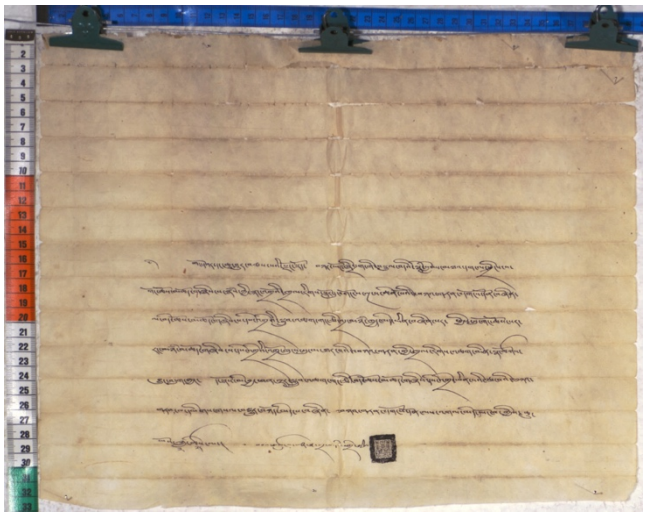


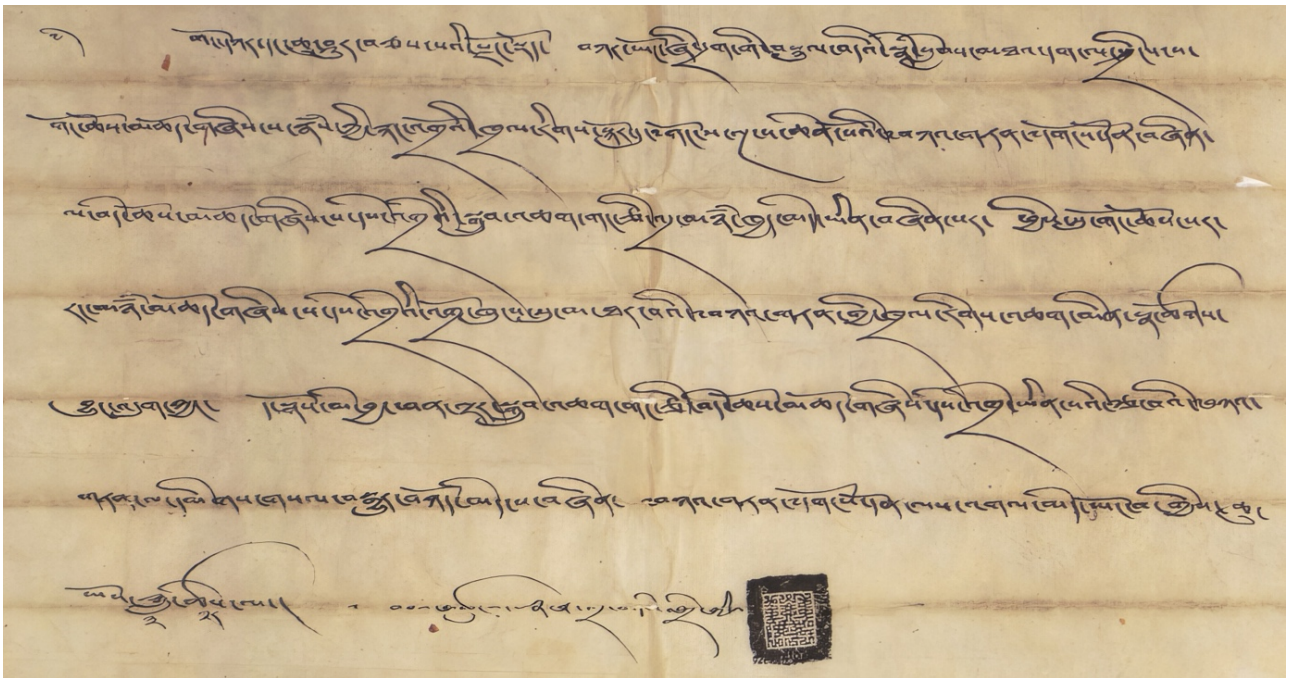
SEAL 37

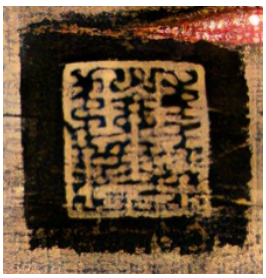
We have two impressions of a *sel dam* seal of the second Tibetan regent 'Phrin las rgya mtsho, one from 1663 (*chu yos*) and another from 1665 (*shing sbrul*).[146]

[146] KDL: 012 2-1/#/7/2/4 (ID 1107), KDL: 012 2-1/#/7/3/4 (ID 1108).

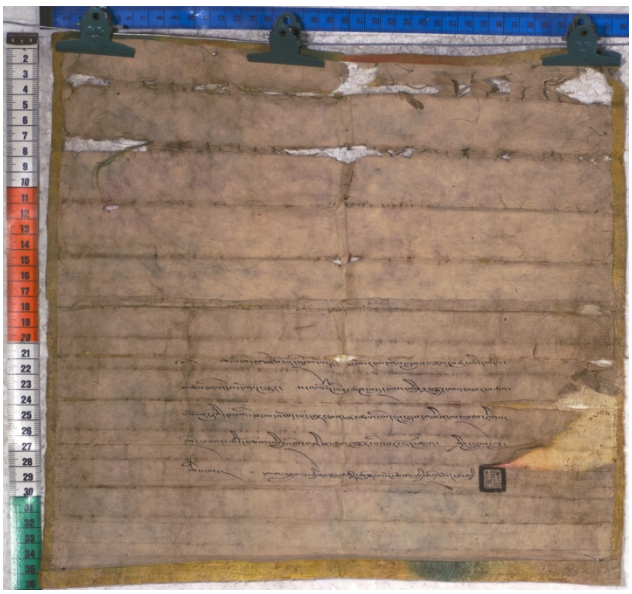
Seal impression from 1663, 1.8 x 1.8 (1.2 x 1.2) cm

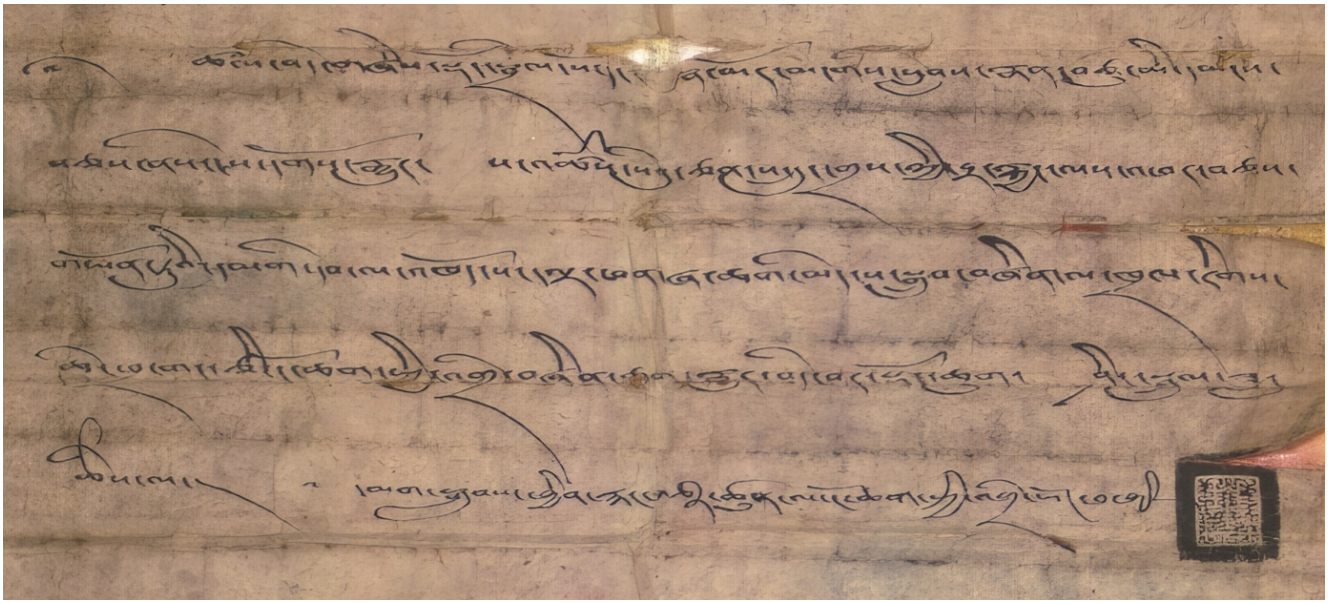






Seal impression from 1665, 1.8 x 1.8 (1.2 x 1.2) cm

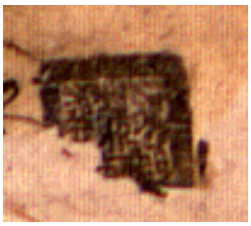




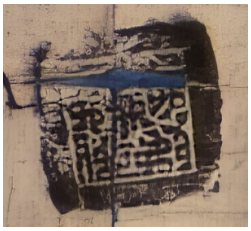
The compiler of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* explains that although this seal is listed in the seal book of the *yig tshang* as the seal of the first regent, he has seen many impressions of the seal that do not date from the first regent's term of office. Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei list this seal as belonging to the second regent.[147] According to them, the seal itself is preserved in the Potala. It is made of iron and is 4 cm high. The side length of the square stamp measures 1.5 cm.

SEAL 38

We have two very damaged impressions of a *sel dam* seal of the fifth Tibetan regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. One is from 1692 and the other from 1695.[148]

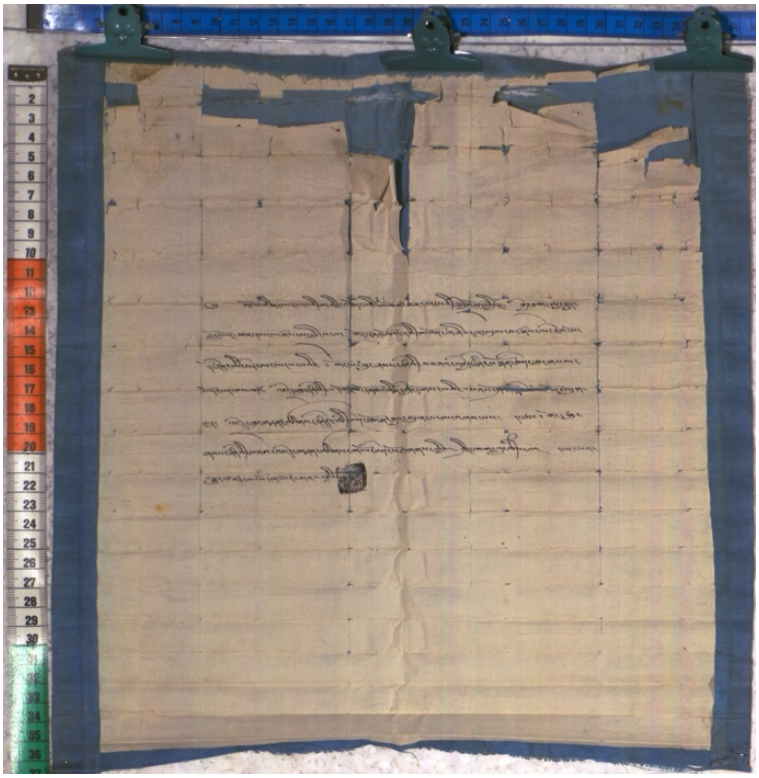

1.5 x ? (1.0 x ?) cm

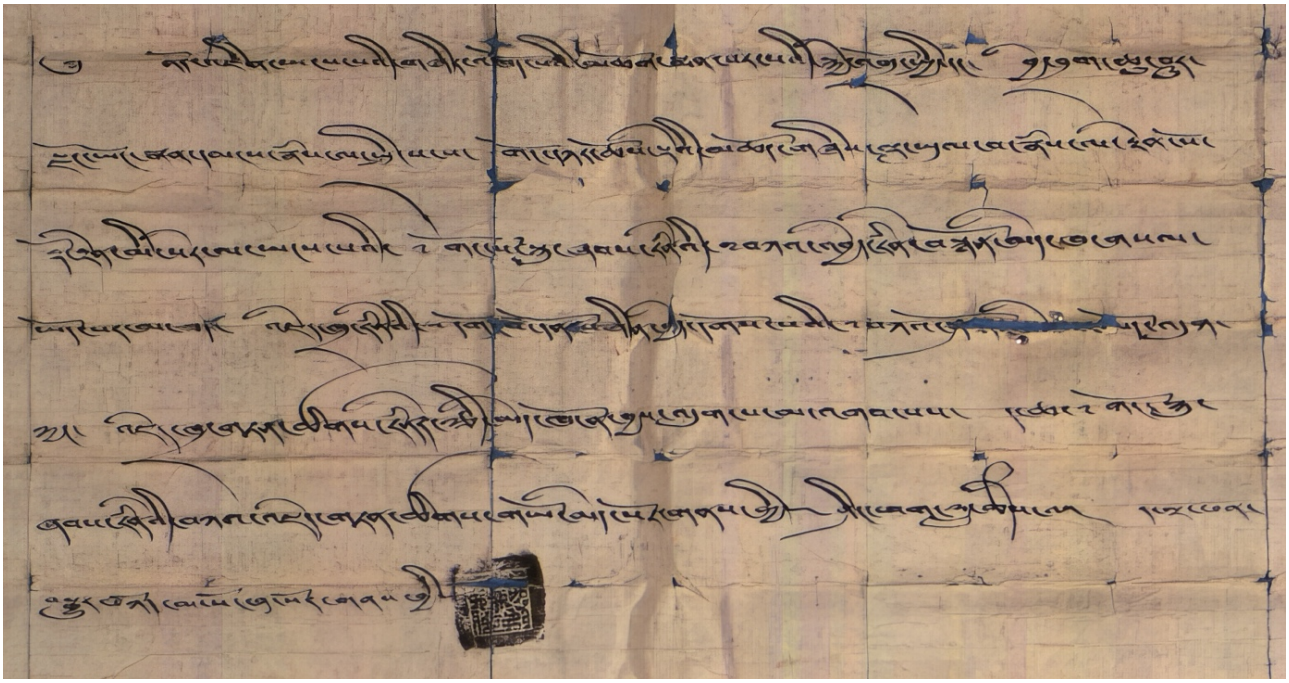
For an image of the document see under SEAL 12, SEAL 14 and SEAL 15.


1.5 x 1.5 (1.0 x 1.0) cm

[147] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 71.

[148] ID 1923 = 012 2-1/#/77/22/4 = k1801 & 012 2-1/#/115/3/4 (ID 2325 = k2180)





Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei list three iron seals with the same design, belonging to the first regent, the third regent and to Ngag dbang rin chen, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's son, who was installed as regent in 1703 and disappeared from the stage after the murder of his father in 1706.[149]

[149] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 71–72. The authors give 1704 as the year of Ngag dbang rin chen's appointment as *sde srid* without citing any sources. Elsewhere the year 1703 is given (see p. 10n20).

The square impressions of the three seals differ only in terms of their side length: 1.5 cm, 1.7 cm and 2.0 cm.

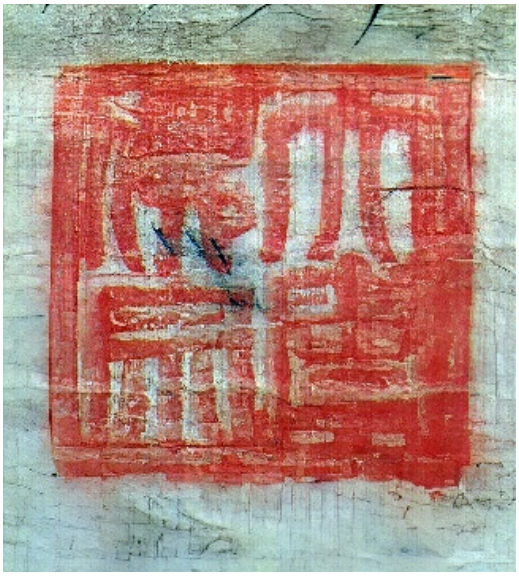
2. Explanation of Various Other Seals

This chapter brings together seal impressions with inscriptions in various languages and scripts. They date from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

2.1 A Chinese Seal of the Phag mo gru pa

SEAL 39

A document issued in 1508 by the ninth Phag mo gru administrator Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa (reign 1499-1564) shows at its bottom the impression of a small seal with a Chinese inscription written in the small Chinese seal script.[150]


4.8 x 4.8 (4.0 x 4.0) cm

Reading from top right to bottom left the inscription reads:

(1) 大闡 (*da chan* 大闡)

(2) 佛宗 (*fu zong* 佛宗)

"Great explanation of Buddhism."

A jade seal with this inscription, whose stamp has the same dimensions of 4.8 x 4.8 cm, was kept in the Nor bu gling kha Palace and, according to Zhu Detao, is now in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa.[151] It has a height of 4.2 cm.

[150] KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/1/3 (ID 989). For an image of the document see under SEAL 7.

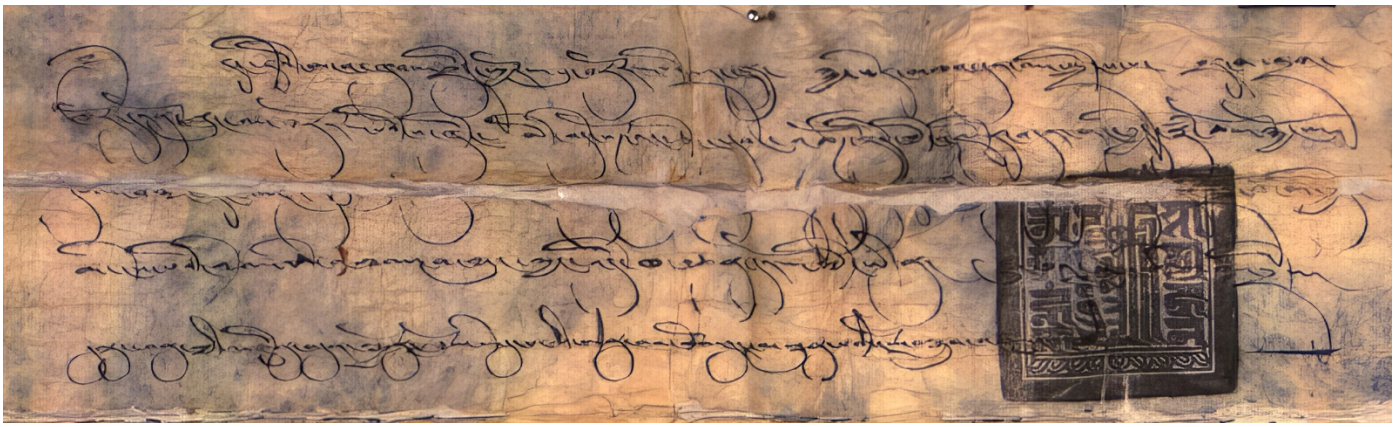
[151] Zhu Detao 2020b. Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei (1991, 93), who described this seal in their catalog, classified it as a seal from the Qing Dynasty. This was corrected by Zhu Detao.

2.2 The *Kālacakra*-Seal and Its Mirror Image

SEAL 40

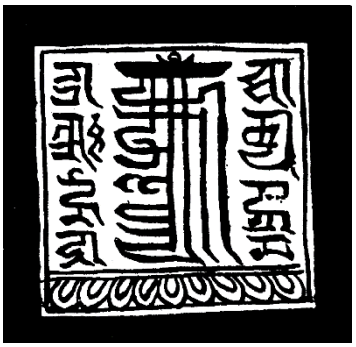
The digital archives contain a document from 1623 (*chu phag*), which shows an impression of a seal that belonged to gTsang pa *sde srid* Karma bsTan skyong dbang po (1605–1642).[152] The impression measures 3.6 x 3.5 (2.8 x 2.8) cm. The impression is slightly damaged.

3.7 x 3.5 (2.9 x 2.9) cm



[152] KDL: 012 2-1/#/6/5/3 (ID 1026).

The inscription is written in Lantsa script. Four letters each on the left and right flank a so-called *kūṭākṣara*, a ligature or cluster of syllables, in vertical alignment. Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* contains a faulty tracing of gTsang pa sde srid's seal impression:[153]



Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei present an impression with the same inscription, without specifying the dimensions.[154] The image reveals that the *kūṭākṣara* is crowned by an *anunāsika*, a sun-moon symbol.

They write that the impression comes from a jade seal with a dragon knob, which is kept in the Potala palace. The original seal owner is not mentioned. They refer to the seal as the "seal of the *Kālacakra*-king Langjiu Wangdan (朗久旺丹)." *Langjiu wangdan* is the Chinese transcription of Tibetan *rNam bcu dbang ldan*, "the ten powerful aspects," a term used to describe the most famous *Kālacakra* mantra.

The four syllables of the left column show the first syllables of the mantra, the *kūṭākṣara* in the middle contains the remaining seven syllables. Together they read: *oṃ āḥ hūṃ ho haṃ kṣa ma la wa ra ya*. The four syllables of the right column are not connected to the *Kālacakra* mantra. They read *śā kya ṅa na*.

Christoph Cüppers analyzed another seal impression, which—although not completely legible—most likely shows the same inscription. The seal belonged to the Ladakhi king Nyi ma rnam rgyal (r. 1694–1729).[155]

[153] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 71

[154] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 111, 114.

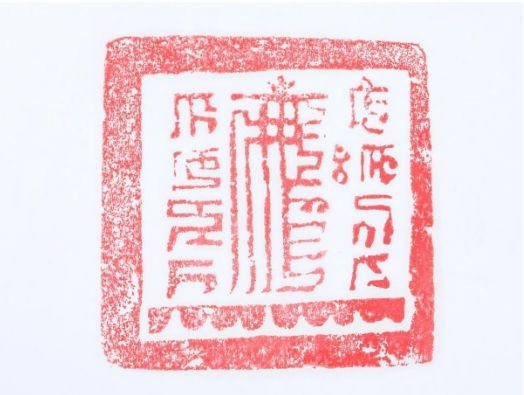
[155] Cüppers 2016, 589–590.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to another *Kālacakra* seal that was shown on a Chinese auction website.[156] It is a gilded seal made of red copper with a beautiful dragon knob. With a side length of 6.8 cm, it has a larger stamp than the seal of the gTsang pa *sde srid*.

According to the description, it was made during the Qing period and belonged to an unspecified Tibetan *Dharma* King (*cangdi fawang* 藏地法王). The inscription engraved in the stamp corresponds

[156] https://liangbaoge.com/qiwu/show/5876438/ (July 28, 2024).

exactly to the inscription on the seal of the gTsang pa *sde srid*. However, there is an oddity that raises the question for what purpose and under what circumstances this seal was produced: The engraved seal inscription is immediately legible, but the stamp impression appears mirror inverted.



2.3 The Seals of Pho lha nas and 'Gyur med rnam rgyal

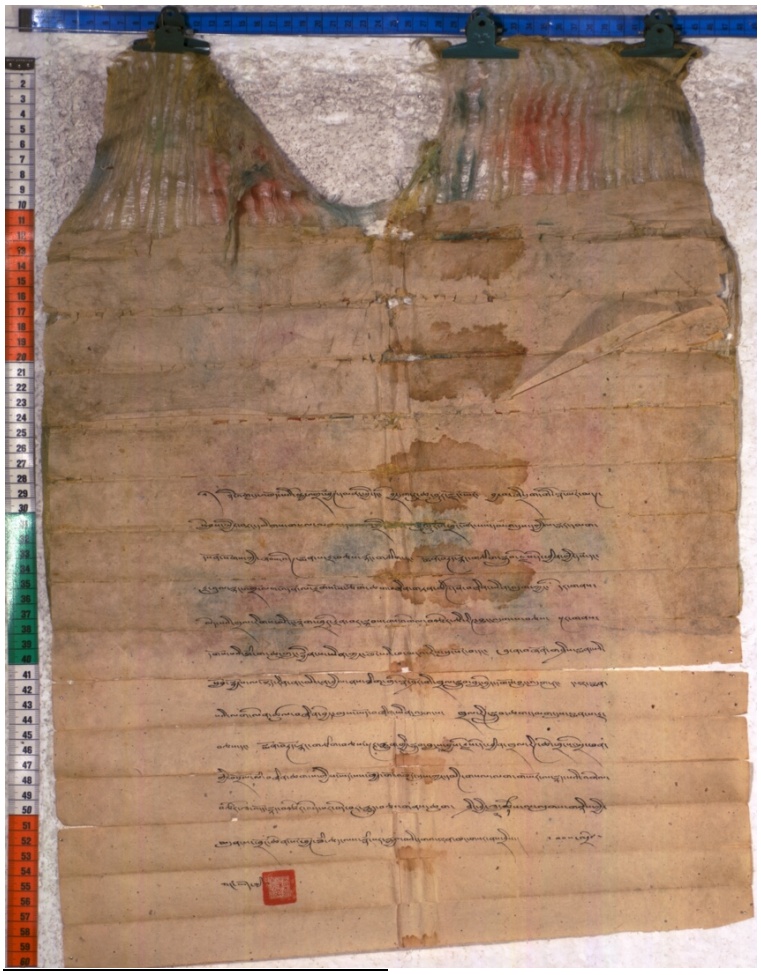
2.3.1 Seals with Chinese Inscriptions

Our database contains red impressions of three different small seals of Pho lha nas with exclusively Chinese inscriptions. The first has a three-column inscription.

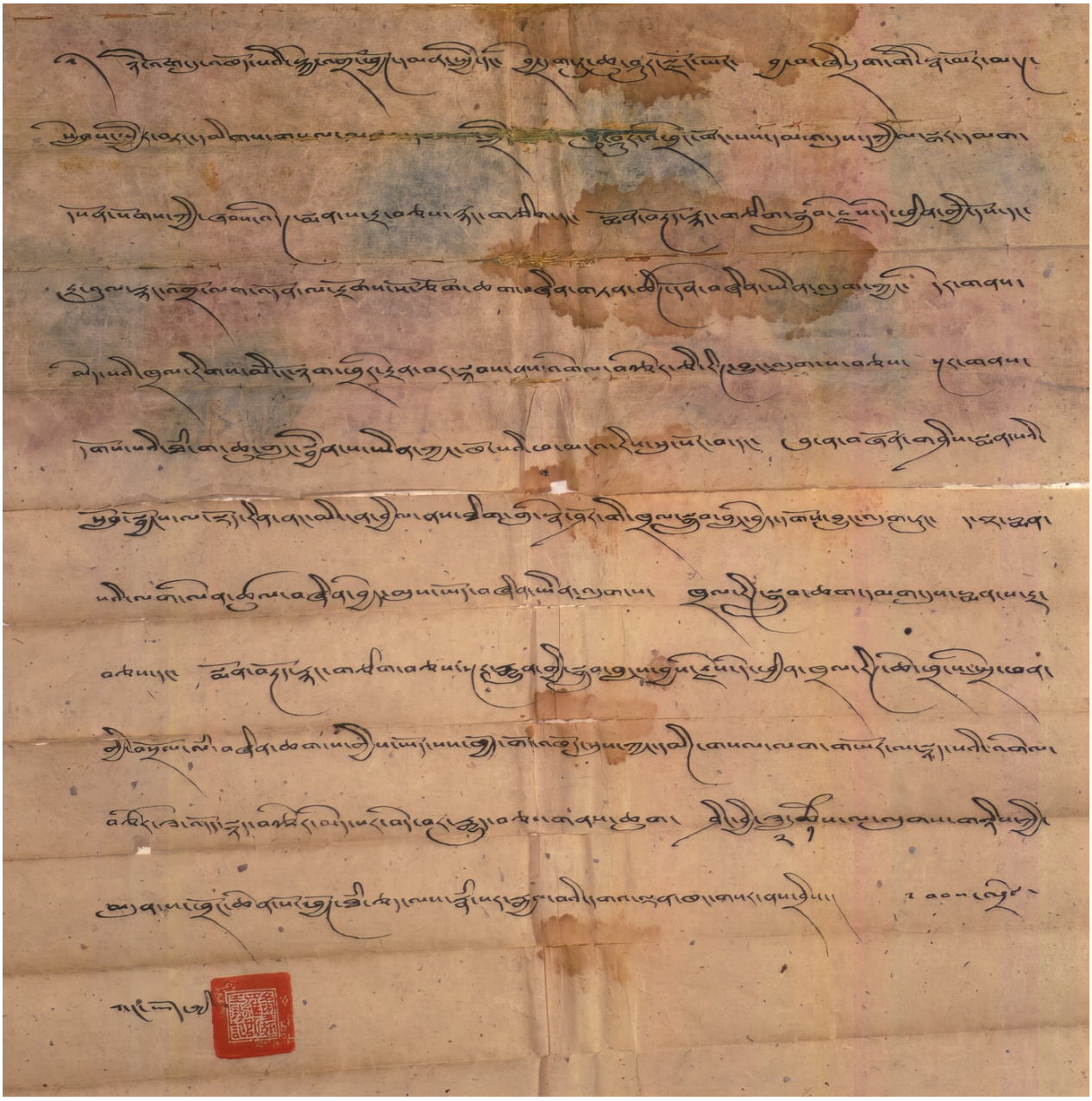
SEAL 41

Document from 1744 (*shing byi*).[157]

2.2 x 2.2 (1.4 x 1.4) cm

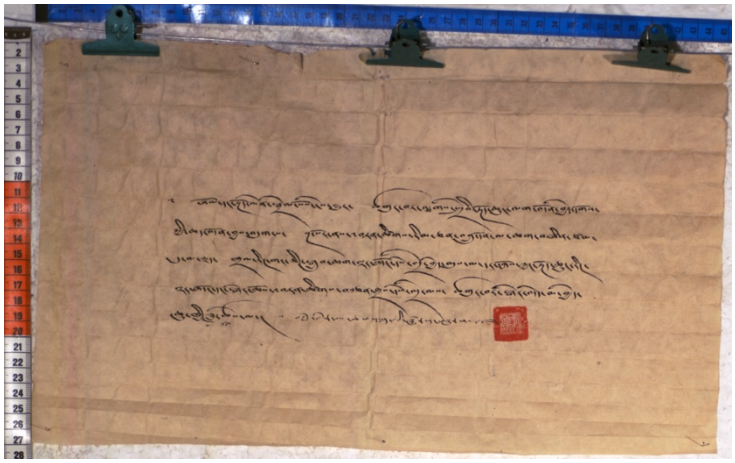


[157] KDL: 012 2-1/#/111/3/4 (ID 2285).

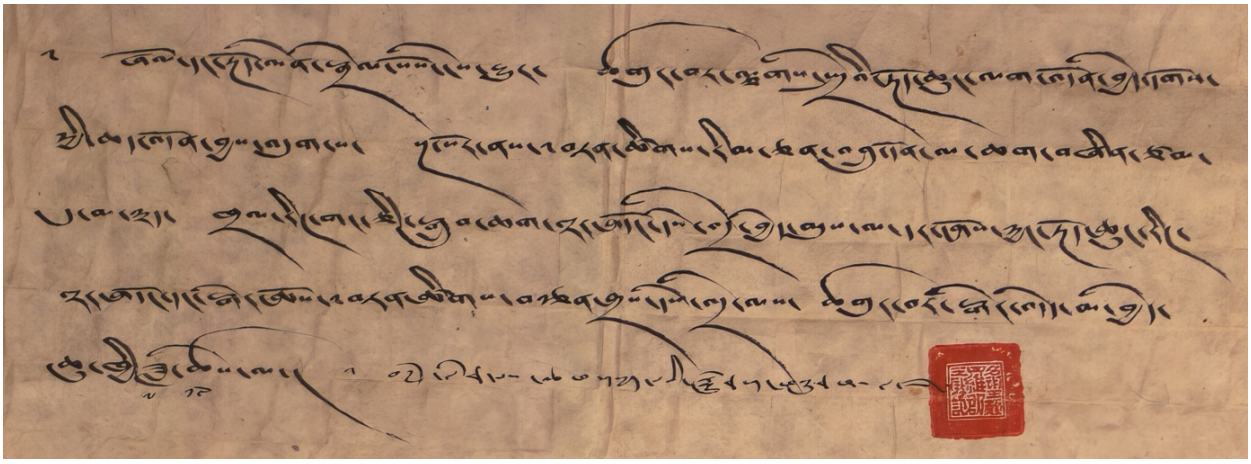


Document from 1742 (*chu khyi*).[158]

2.3 x 2.3 (1.4 x 1.4) cm

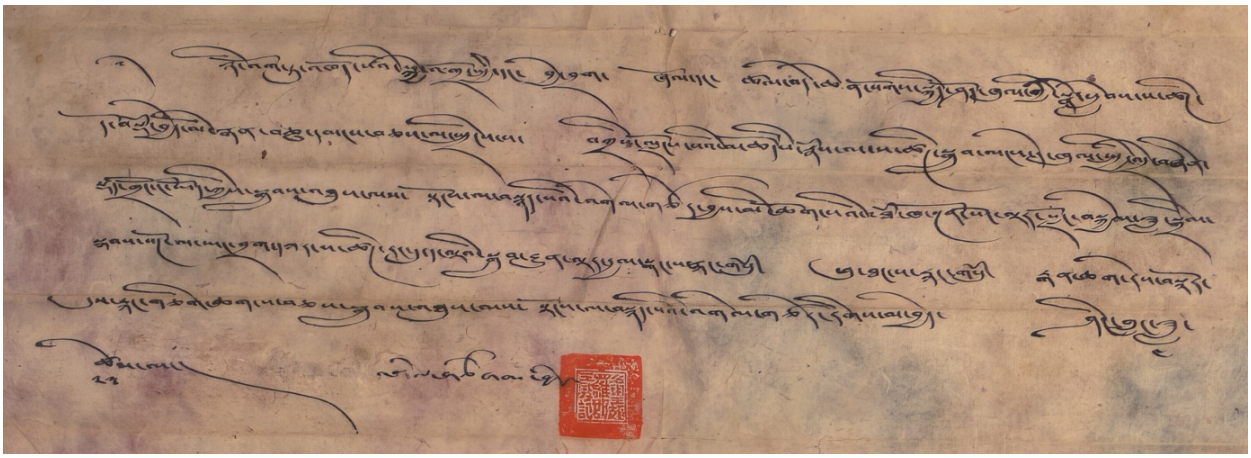


[158] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/21/4 (ID 1734).



Document from 1745 (*shing glang*).[159]

2.2 x 2.2 (1.4 x 1.4) cm



The columns are to be read from right to left as follows:

(1) 名望頗 *ming wang po*
(2) 羅郡 *luo jun*
(3) 王鈐記 *wang qian ji*

[159] KDL: 012 2-1/#/57/2/4 (ID 1650).

„Seal of the prestigious Poluo, prince of the second rank." Obviously, the word *ming wang*, "prestigious", is a Chinese transcription of the Tibetan term *mi dbang* or *mi'i dbang po*, "ruler over men", a common epithet of Pho lha nas in Tibetan sources.

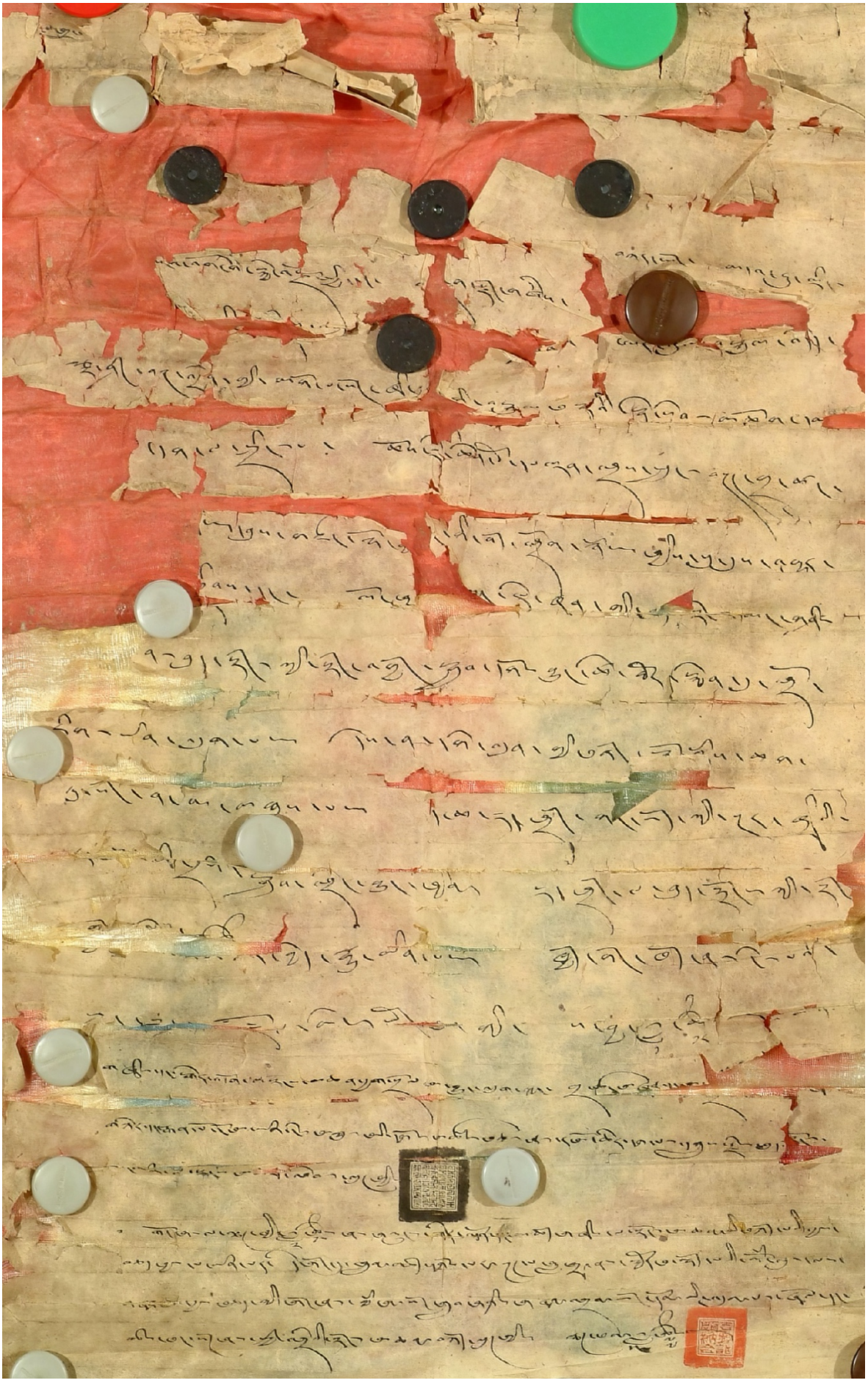
SEAL 42

The impression of the second seal has two columns of Chinese inscription.

Seal impression from 1731 (*lcags phag*).[160]

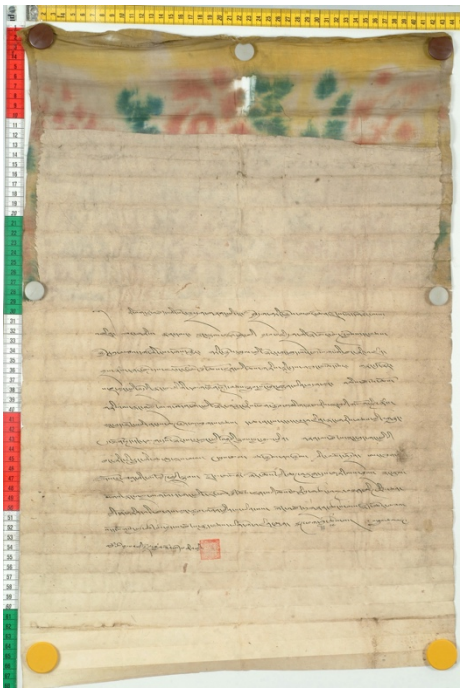
2.1 x 2.1 (1.3 x 1.3) cm

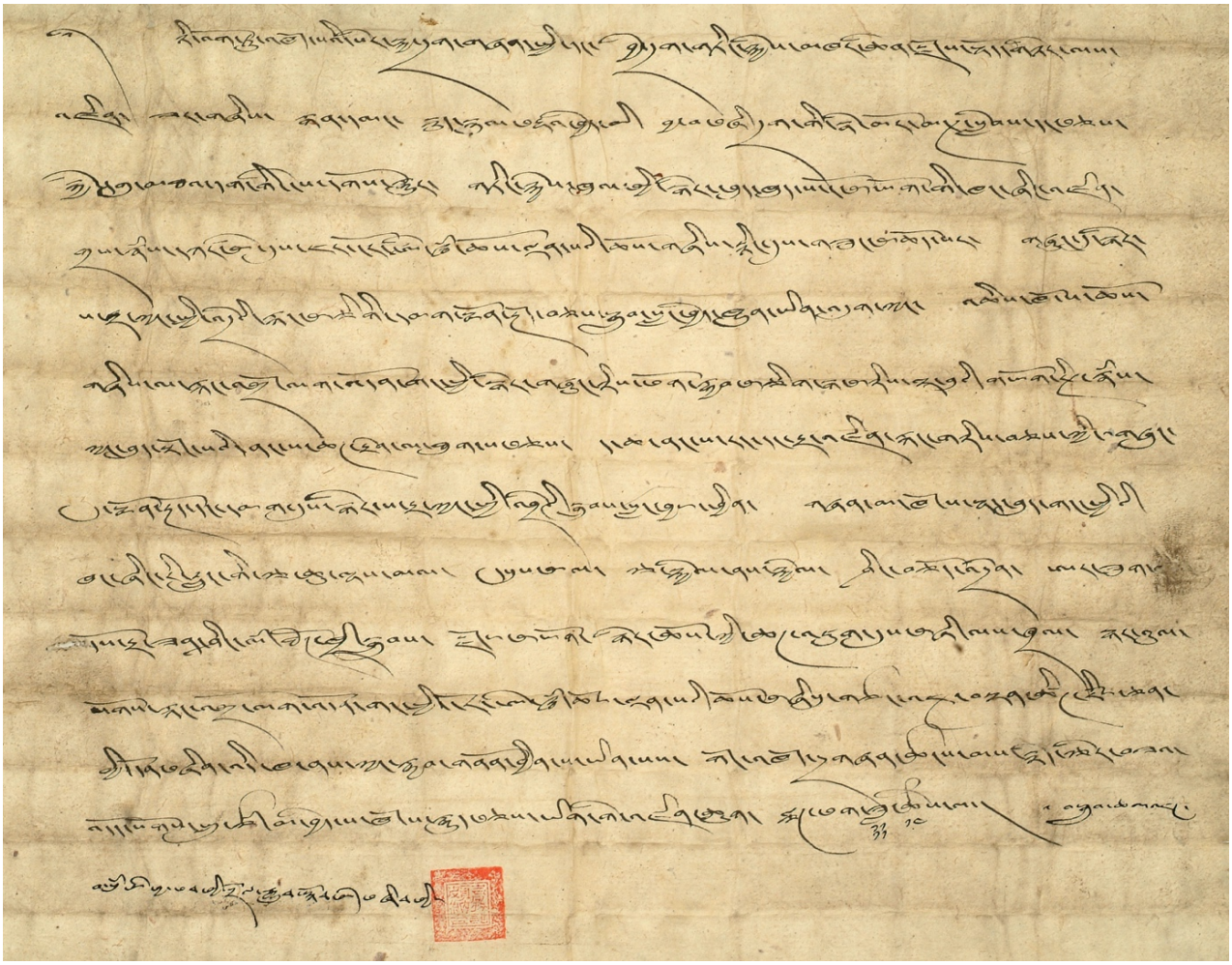
[160] AA: 0799_AA_2_1_167.



Seal impression from 1732 (*lcags-phag zla 11 11 tshes 14*, corresponds January 10, 1732).[161]

2.1 x 2.1 (1.3 x 1.3) cm





[161] WB: 1656_WB_8.

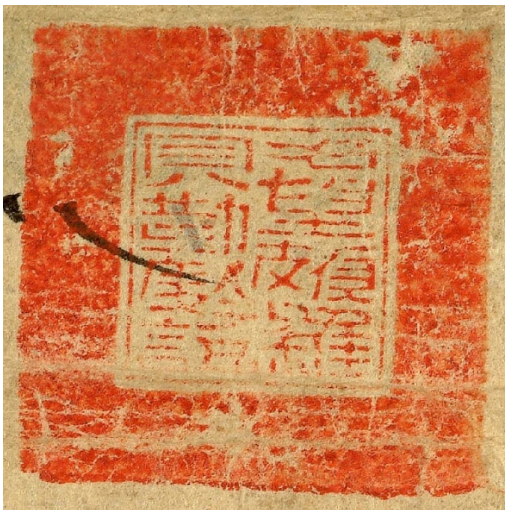
Unlike SEAL 41, the columns here are arranged from left to right.

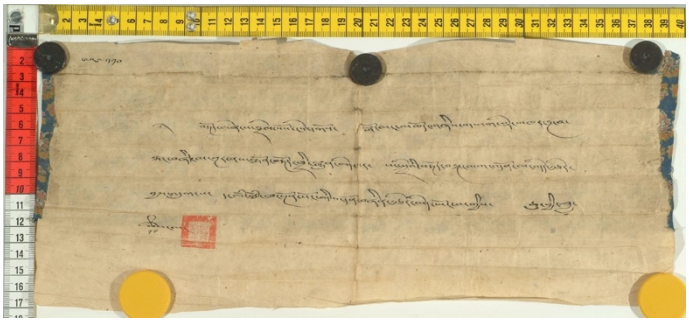
(1) 頗納台 *po na tai*[162]
(2) 吉鈐記 *ji qian ji*

"Seal of Pona Taiji."

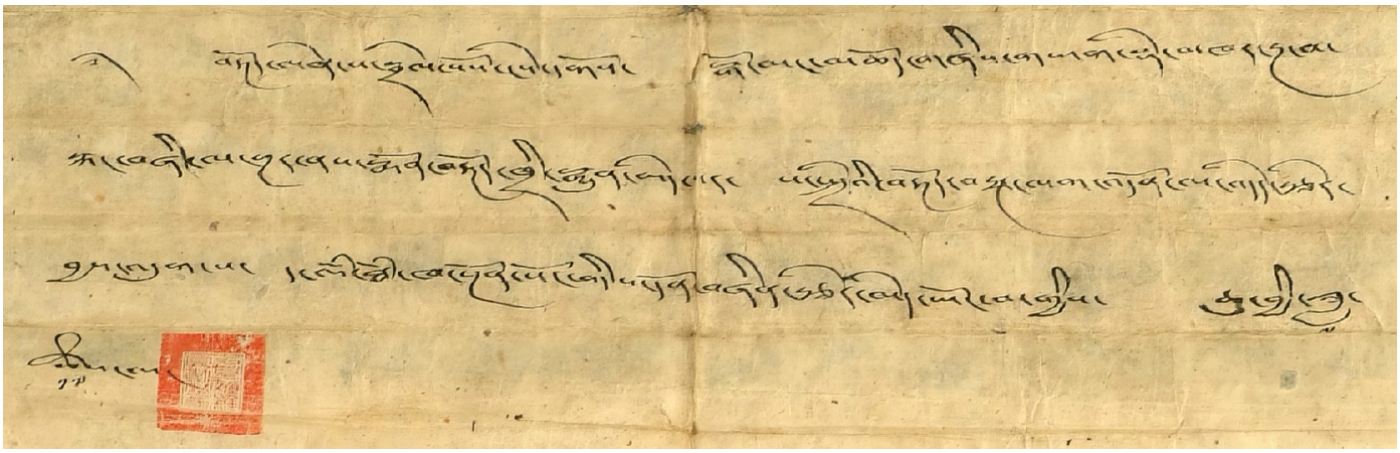
SEAL 43

The impression of the third seal has two columns of Chinese inscription arranged from right to left. The first impression is from 1731 (*chu byi*).[163]



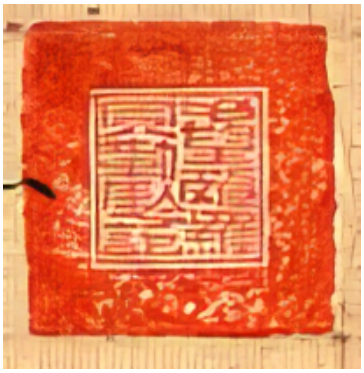


2.2 x 2.1 (1.3 x 1.3) cm

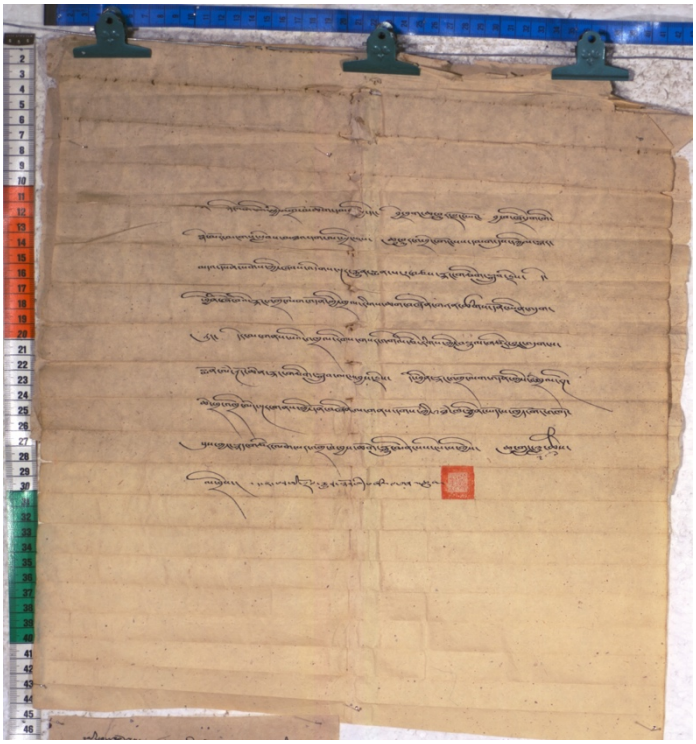


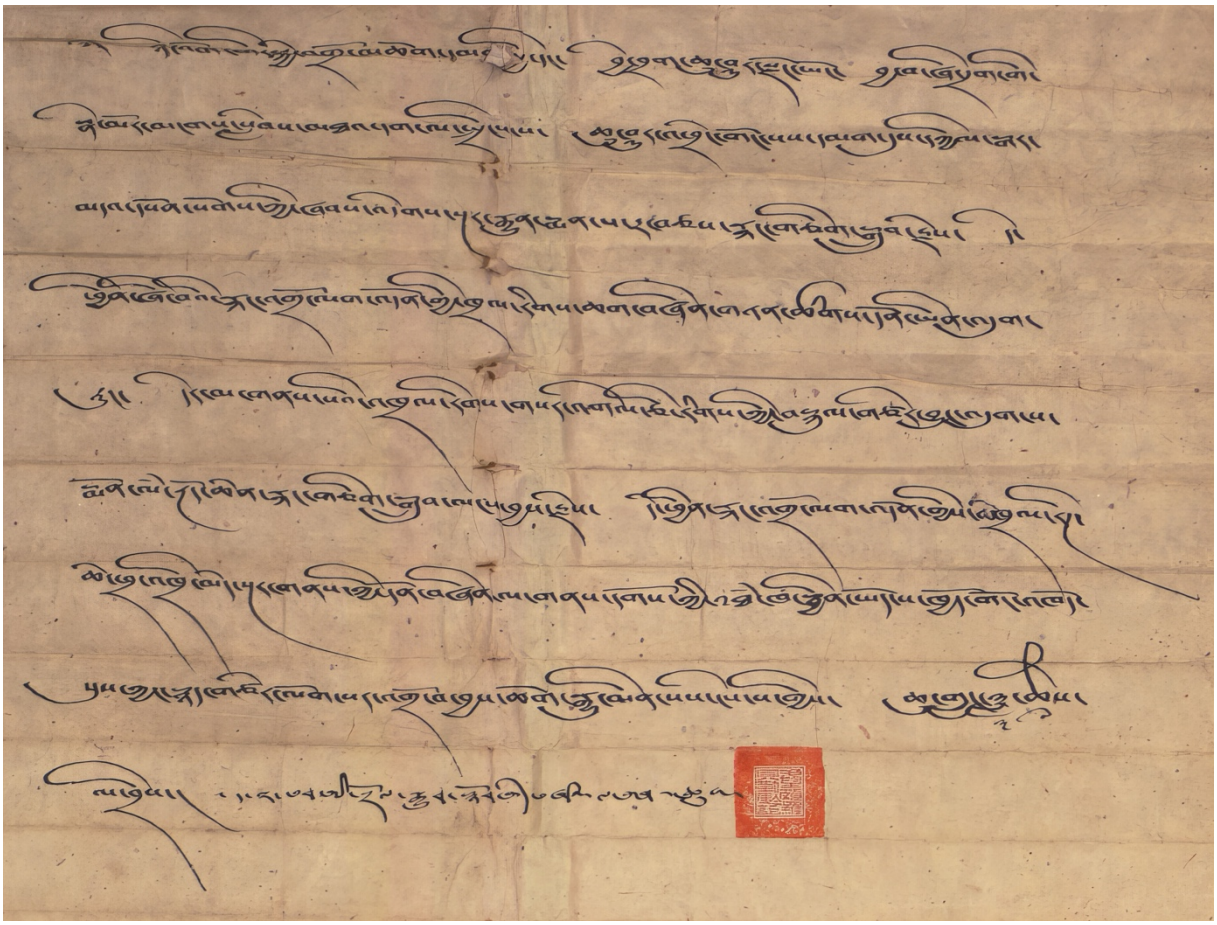
[162] Zhu Detao 2020a, 92, mistakenly reads the first character of this column as 煩 (*fan*).
[163] AA: 0793_AA_2_1_161.

The second impression dates from 1733 (*chu glang*).[164]



2.2 x 2.2 (1.3 x 1.3) cm





[164] KDL: 012 2-1/#/39/5/4 (ID1419).

The seal inscription reads:

(1) 名望頗羅 *ming wang po luo*[165]
(2) 貝勒鈐記 *bei le qian ji*

"Seal of the prestigious Poluo, prince of the third rank."

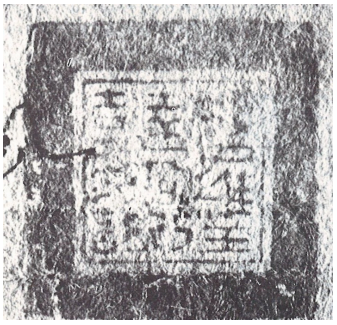
Zou Xicheng (邹西成) has published images of an iron seal with a knob decorated with silver and gold inlays that is 8.8 cm high and whose square stamp has a side length of 2.2 cm.[166] The seal's inscription is identical with SEAL 43. However, the frame of the inscription shows an additional pattern of the sun and moon at the top and five dots on the remaining three sides. In particular, the frame has the four syllables *rab byung gra* (sic!) *tshang* written in Tibetan *dbu can* script on its four corners.

So far, I have not seen any document that shows an impression of this seal. I doubt whether a seal with an additional inscription saying "The Community of Monks" was ever used by Pho lha nas himself.

SEAL 44

Schuh also presents the impression of a small three-column seal of Pho lha nas' son 'Gyur med rnam rgyal with exclusively Chinese inscription.[167] The impression dates July 25, 1747.

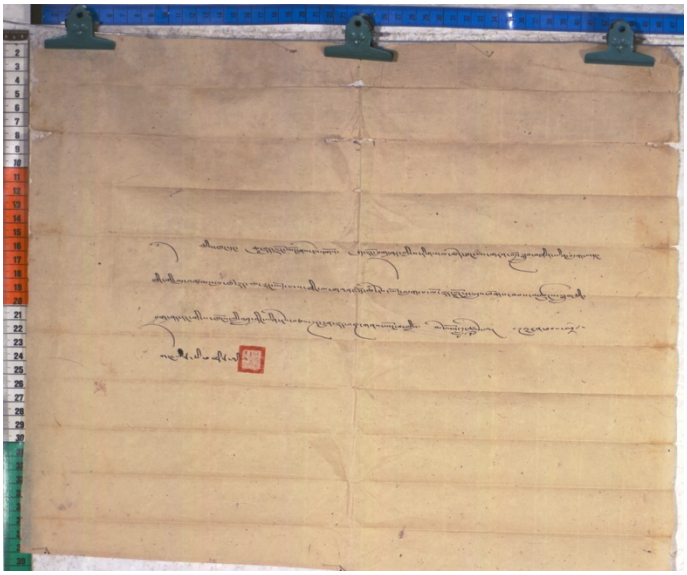
[165] Zou Xicheng 2011, 98, mistakenly reads the first two characters of this column as 噶倫 *ga lun*. This has already been corrected by Zhu Detao 2020a, 92.
[166] Zou Xicheng 2011, 99.
[167] Schuh 1981, 104, 107.

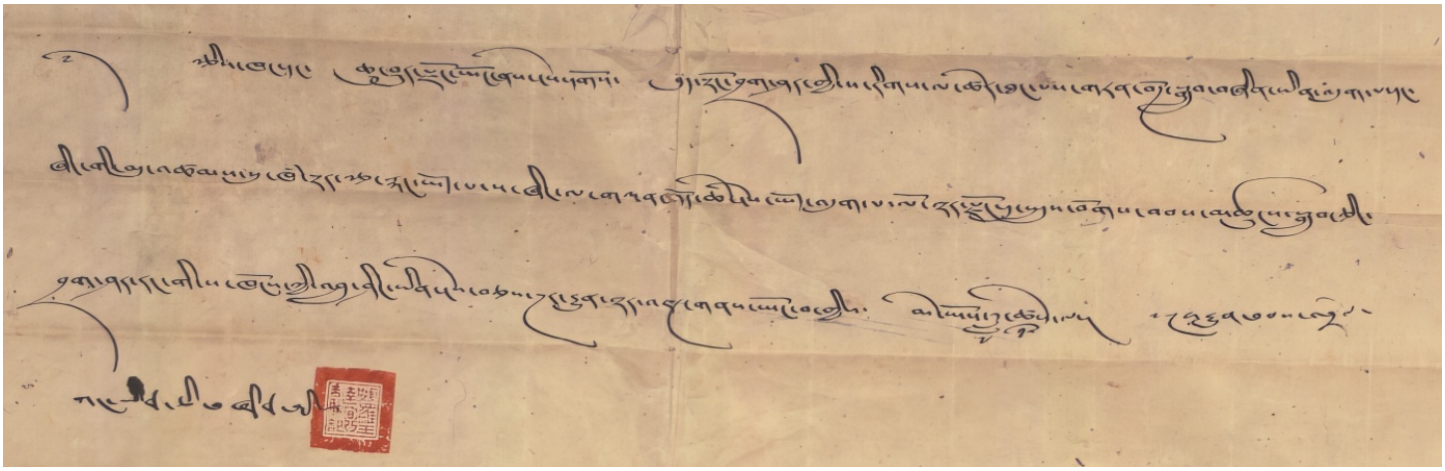


According to him, the print measures 1.9 x 2.0 (1.3 x 1.3) cm.

Our database contains a document with another impression of the same seal dating August 24, 1747 (Fire Hare year, 19th day of the seventh Tibetan month).[168]

1.9 x 1.9 (1.3 x 1.3) cm





The three columns are to be read from right to left. I can only offer a clear reading for the right and left columns. My reading of the middle column is uncertain.

[168] KDL: 012 2-1/#/29/3/4 (ID 1324). The Tibetan Archives attributed the document to Pho lha nas but he died already March 12, 1747.

(1) 頗羅王 *po luo wang*
(2) 垄 ... (?) *lu* ... (?)
(3) 吉鈐記 *ji qian ji*

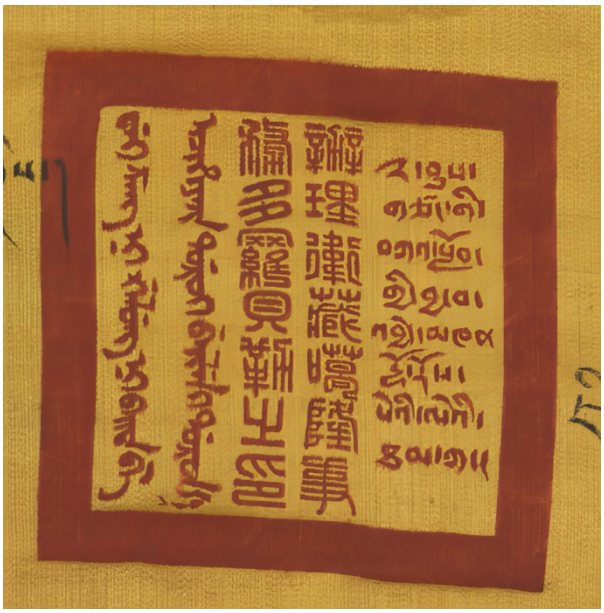
"Seal of Po luo wang Lu ... ji."

2.3.2 Seals with Trilingual Inscriptions

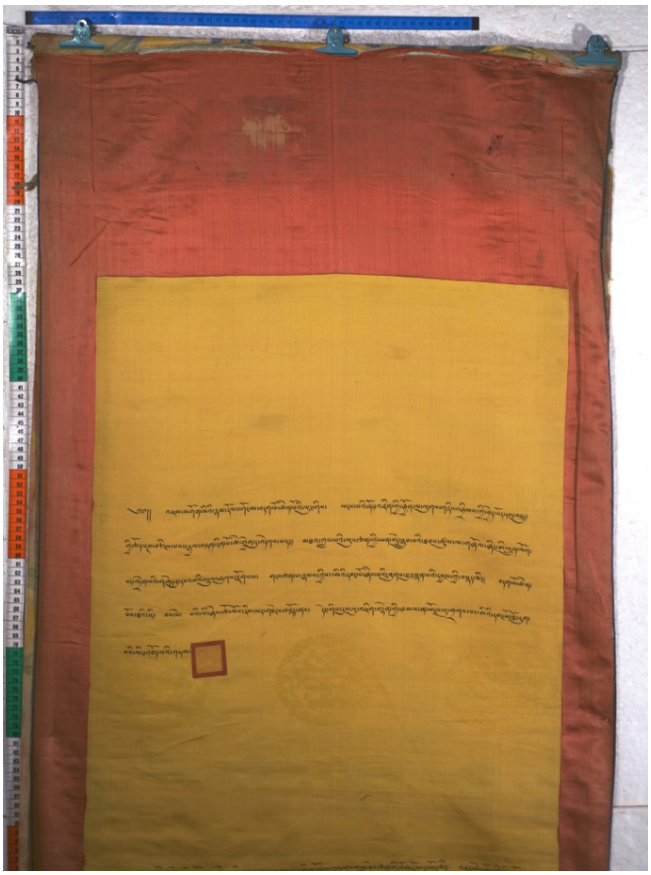
From Tibetan documents, we know impressions of two different seals of Pho lha nas that show a trilingual inscription in Manchu, Chinese and Tibetan. The corresponding seals themselves no longer seem to exist.

SEAL 45

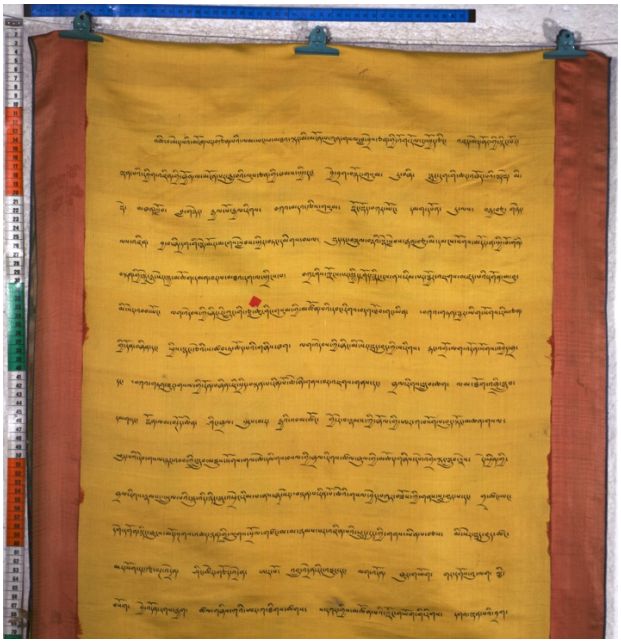
Our database contains two documents that show an impression of the first seal. The first one was issued in 1735.[169]

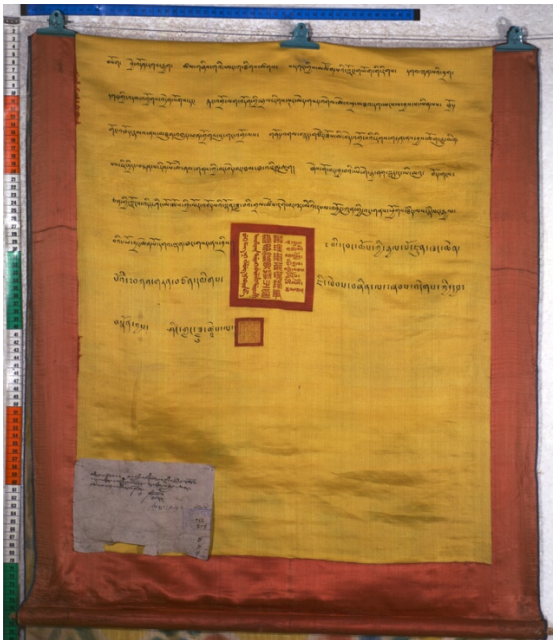


10.9 x 10.9 (8.6 x 8.6) cm



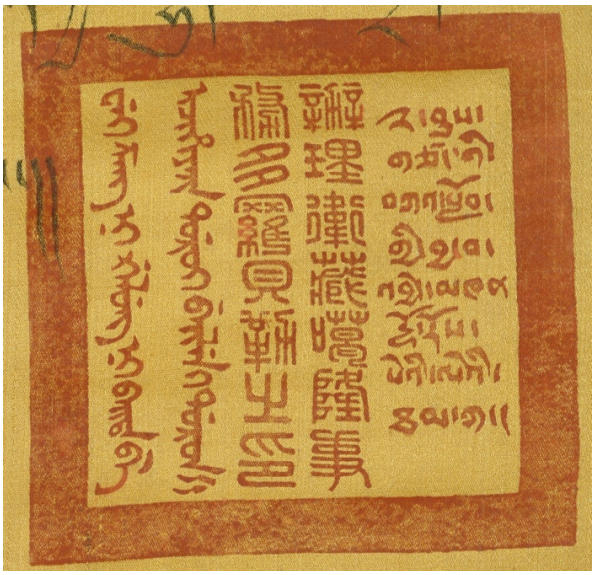
[169] KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/8/4 (ID 1122).



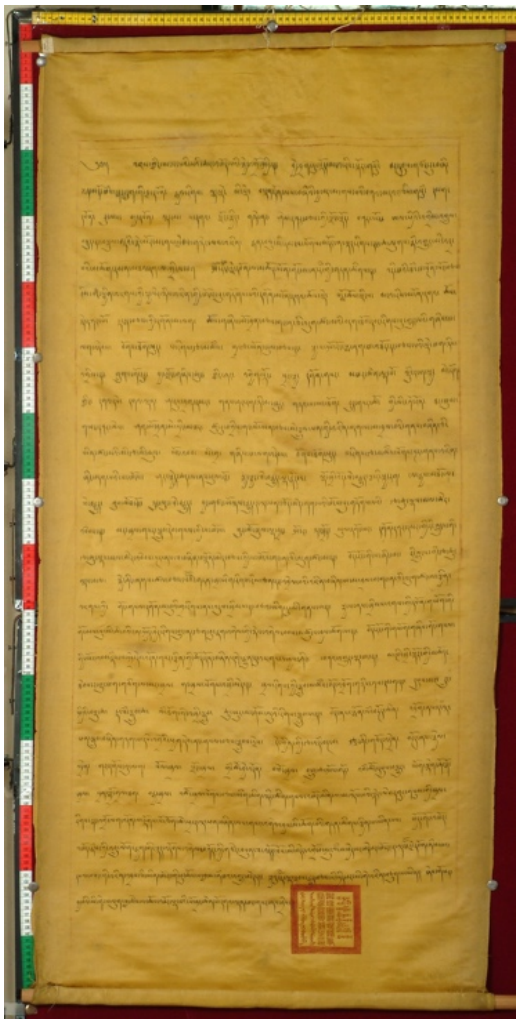


Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 284—286.

The second document was issued in 1739.[170]



10.9 x 10.9 (8.5 x 8.5) cm



[170] LTWA: 1673_LTWA_891.

Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 287—289.

Two further impressions of this seal can be found on documents issued by Pho lha nas, which Helga Uebach has analysed.[171]

The two columns of Manchu text read from left to right:

(1) *wei zang-ni g'alung-ni bayita-be*
(2) *icihiyara doroi beile-i doron /*

"Seal of the prince of the third rank, administrator of the affairs of a minister (*bka' blon*) of Wei zang (dBus gTsang)."

The two columns of the Chinese text—written in the small Chinese seal script, *xiao zhuan*—read from right to left:

(1) *banli wei cang galun shi* (辦理衛藏噶倫事)
(2) *wu duo luo beile zhi yin* (務多羅貝勒之印)

"Seal of the prince of the third rank (Doroi Beile), who handles the affairs of a minister (*bka' blon*) of Weizang (dBus gTsang)."

The Tibetan text—written in *dbu med* cript—reads:
(1) *Z dbus*
(2) *gtsang gi*
(3) *bka' slob*
(4) *gyi bya ba*
(5) *'byed mkhan*
(6) *dho ros*
(7) *pe'i le'i*
(8) *tham ka/*

"Seal of Dho ros Pe'i le (Doroi Beile), the executor of directives for dBus and gTsang."

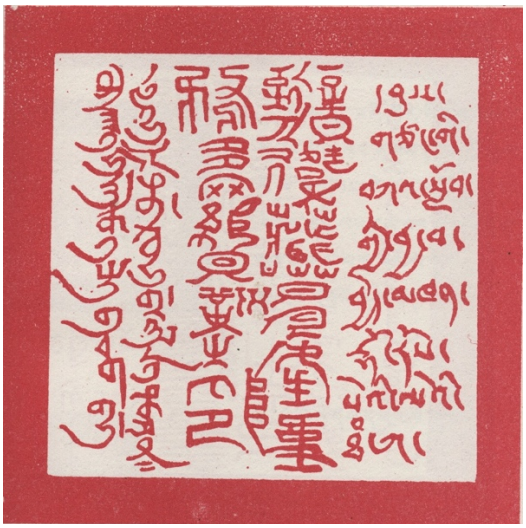
The seal inscription does not mention the seal owner by name. Instead, it mentions his area of responsibility and the title awarded to him by the Yongzheng Emperor in 1731.[172]

[171] Uebach 1980, 123; Uebach 2007, 268.

[172] Petech 1972, 164; Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 79.

SEAL 46

Various publications from the People's Republic of China have published images of another seal stamp with an almost identical trilingual inscription, which differs significantly in terms of calligraphy.[173]



Documents showing this seal impression have not yet been found. Uebach has doubted whether this is a genuine seal impression at all. She considers it possible that it is merely a freehand drawing.[174] Zhu Detao considers that the script of this seal impression is more scribbled and random, and it looks like it was hand-drawn and traced. Nevertheless, he claims that it is an impression of a seal that is probably a replica of the previous seal and whose square stamp has a side length of 10.4 cm and is now kept in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa.[175] For this information he refers to the book of Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei. However, if you look there, you will only find the dimensions of the stamp and the statement that it is a silver seal. There is no indication of where the actual seal is located.[176] As far as the seals themselves are still available, Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei generally not only indicate their storage location but also state the height of the seal. Therefore, I suspect that they did not have a corresponding seal for this "seal impression". But where does the information about the side length of the stamp come from? I assume that this image of the trilingual *beile* seal comes from one of the Tibetan seal books, which often do not contain original stamp impressions but rather tracings. The image, for example, is identical to the one found in the catalog included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, which was published by Chab spel and Ma grong.[177] Whether by chance or not, the illustration there has a side length of exactly 10.4 cm.

[173] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 79; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 57; Chen 2003, 59; Mdo mkhar zhabs drung 2002, plate 2.

[174] Uebach 2007, 268n4.

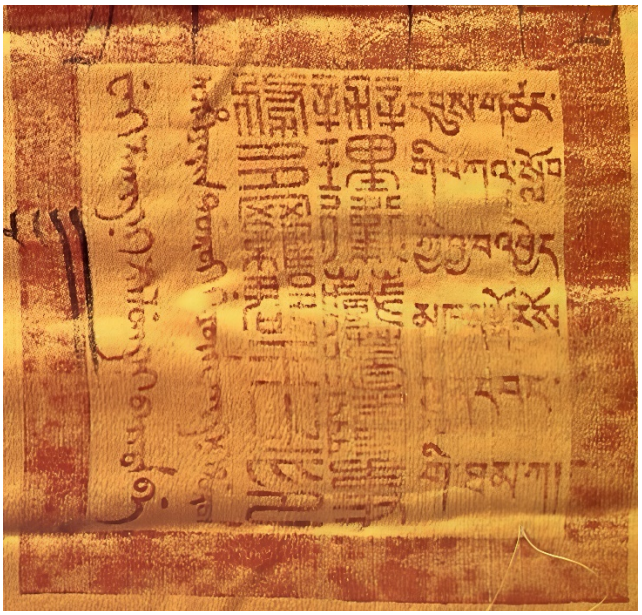
[175] Zhu Detao 2020a, 90.

[176] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 79.

[177] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 57.

SEAL 47

On January 11, 1740, Pho lha nas was awarded the title of a prince of the second rank (*jun wang* 郡王) by the Qianlong Emperor.[178] The inscription of the new trilingual seal he received on this occasion differed from that of the previous seal (SEAL 45, SEAL 46) only in that the title *beile* was replaced by the title *jun wang* and the Tibetan text now appeared in the *dbu can* script. The only document known to me to date that shows an impression of this seal was published by Schuh in 1981.[179] The impression is from 1744. Schuh measured 10.9 x10.6 (8.6 x 8.2) cm for its side lengths. However, Schuh mentions that he saw another impression of this seal on a document from 1749, which would mean that this seal continued to be used by Pho lha nas' son 'Gyur med rdo rje even after his death.[180]



2.3.3 Seals with Inscriptions in 'Phags pa Script

SEAL 48

Pho lha nas (1689–1747) used three different seals, the impression of which shows a multi-column text in the 'Phags pa script. Six impressions of the first seal on Tibetan documents are currently known, all

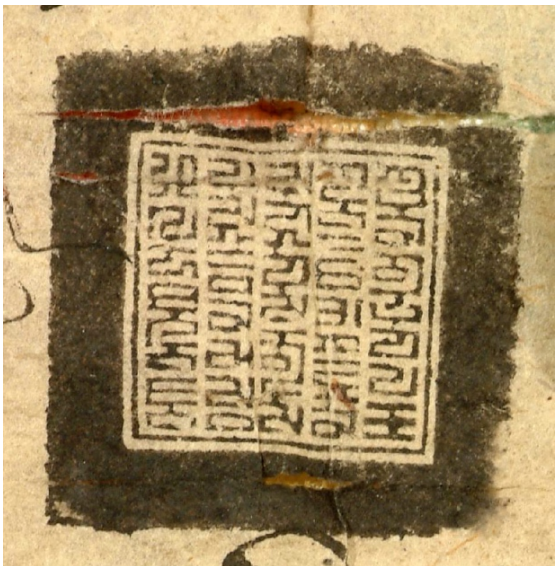
[178] Petech 1972, 180–181.

[179] Schuh 1981, 71–72, 98. Zhu Detao's illustration originates from the same publication (Zhu Detao 2020a, 91 no. 7). Uebach (2007, 268n2) has already pointed out that the reading *icihiyajin* in the Manchurian text should be corrected to *icihiyara*. The catalog included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* published by Chab spel and Ma grong contains a drawing of this seal (Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 58). However, the information added there does not appear to be correct.

[180] Schuh 1981, 103. Schuh mistakenly wrote 1947 instead of 1747.

of which date between 1727 and 1730.[181] Except one, all impressions are black. The seal itself no longer seems to exist.

The black impression dates from 1729 (*sa bya*),[182] the red one from 1730 (*lcags khyi*).[183]



2.4 x 2.4 (1.7 x 1.7) cm

2.5 x 2.5 (1.7 x 1.7) cm

The inscription reads:[184]

(1) *pho lha tha'i ji*
(2) *bsod P nams P*
(3) *stobs rgyas*
(4) *kyi P tham ka/ don*
(5) *kun grub pa P*

"Seal of Pho lha *tha'i ji* bSod nams stobs rgyas, through which all goals are achieved."

[181] AA: 0799_AA_2_1_167; LTWA: LTWA: 0875_LTWA_54; AA: 0783_AA_2_1_151; KHD: 0485_KHD; Schuh 1981, 67—68, 101.

[182] AA: 0799_AA_2_1_167. For an image of the document see under SEAL 42. The measurement of 4.9 cm given in Zhu Detao 2020a, 90, is incorrect.

[183] LTWA: 0875_LTWA_54. For an image of the document see below under SEAL 49.

[184] I follow Schuh's convention of rendering pseudographs in the transliteration by P and special punctuation marks, but mostly symbols indicating respect, by Z. For a tracing of the seal inscription together with a German translation see Schuh 1981, 68.

SEAL 49

There are twelve impressions of the second seal in our database.[185] Three more were published in Schuh 1981, 70–71, 92. All impressions are from 1729 onwards. Except one, all are red. The impressions measure between 3.8 x 3.8 and 4.0 x 4.0 (2.8 x 2.8) cm. The seal itself no longer seems to exist. For a tracing of the six-column seal inscription see Schuh 1981, 71. Note that the tracing of the initial sign differs from the seal impressions, which show instead of . Since Schuh's three images of the seal impressions are not easy to read, this is probably a misreading. The correct initial sign is shown at the top in Schuh 1981, 44. The seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* presents for the fifth column the reading *skabs kun tu bkra shis kyi /* instead of Schuh's reading *skabs kin* (!) *ti* (!) *bkra shis kyi /*.[186] While Schuh's transcription is correct, the Tibetan seal book has inserted the orthographically correct spelling.

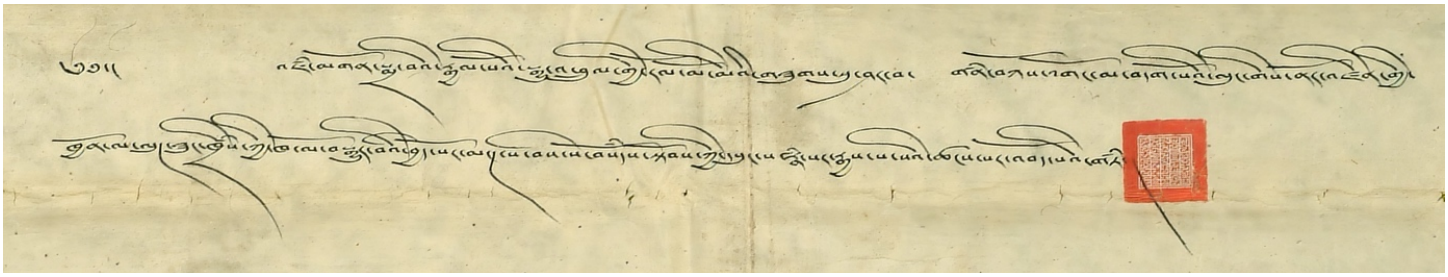
Impression from 1730 (*lcags khyi*).[187]

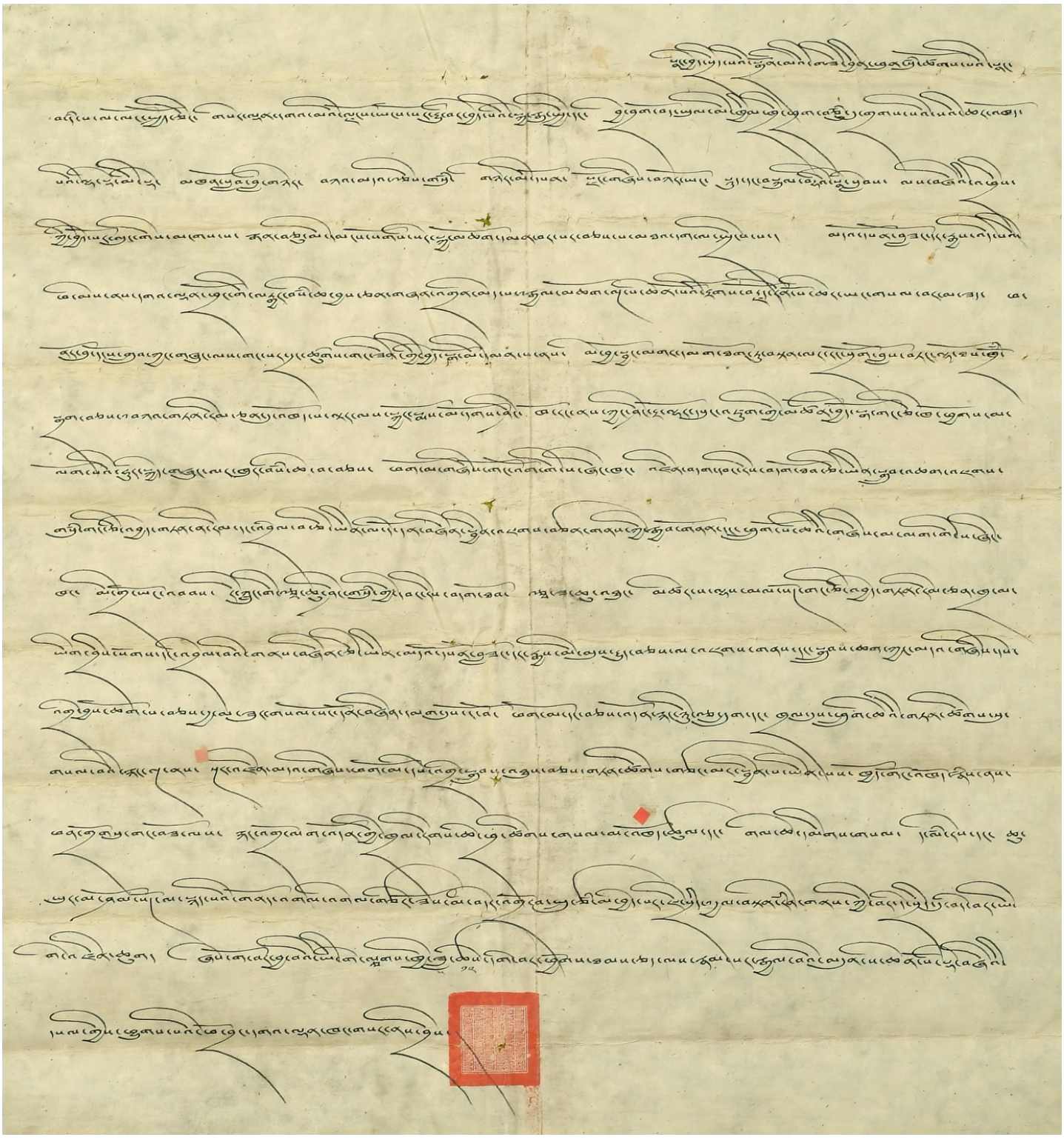
4.0 x 4.0 (2.8 x 2.8) cm

[185] KDL: 012 2-1/#/112/10/4 (ID 2302); KDL: 012 2-1/#/97/3/4 (ID 2133); KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/2/4 (ID 1214); KDL: 012 2-1/#/97/2/4 (ID 2132); KDL: 012 2-1/#/115/8/4 (ID 2330); KDL: 012 2-1/#/88/1/4 (ID 2041); KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/8/4 (ID 1122); LTWA: 0875_LTWA_54; LTWA: 0875_LTWA_55; AA: 0792_AA_2_1_160; AA: 0798_AA_2_1_166; WB: 1654_WB_6.

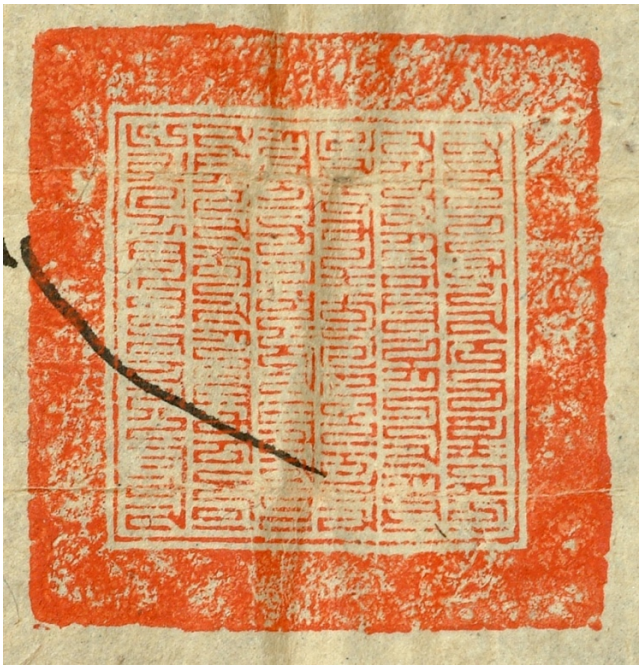
[186] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 25v (the middle inscription written with red ink); Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 60.

[187] LTWA: 0875_LTWA_54.

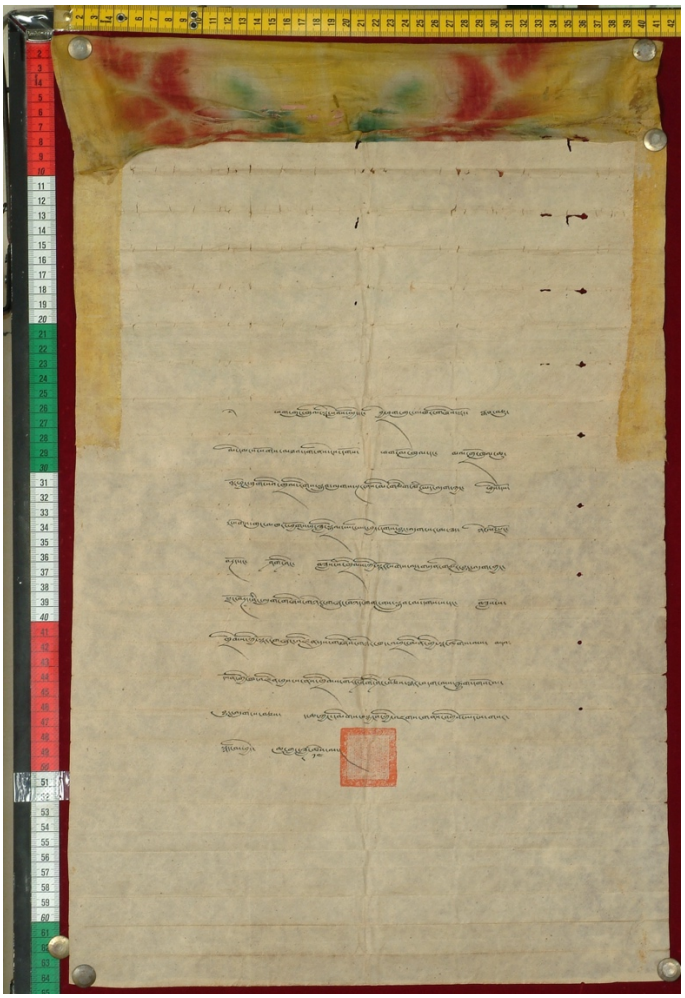




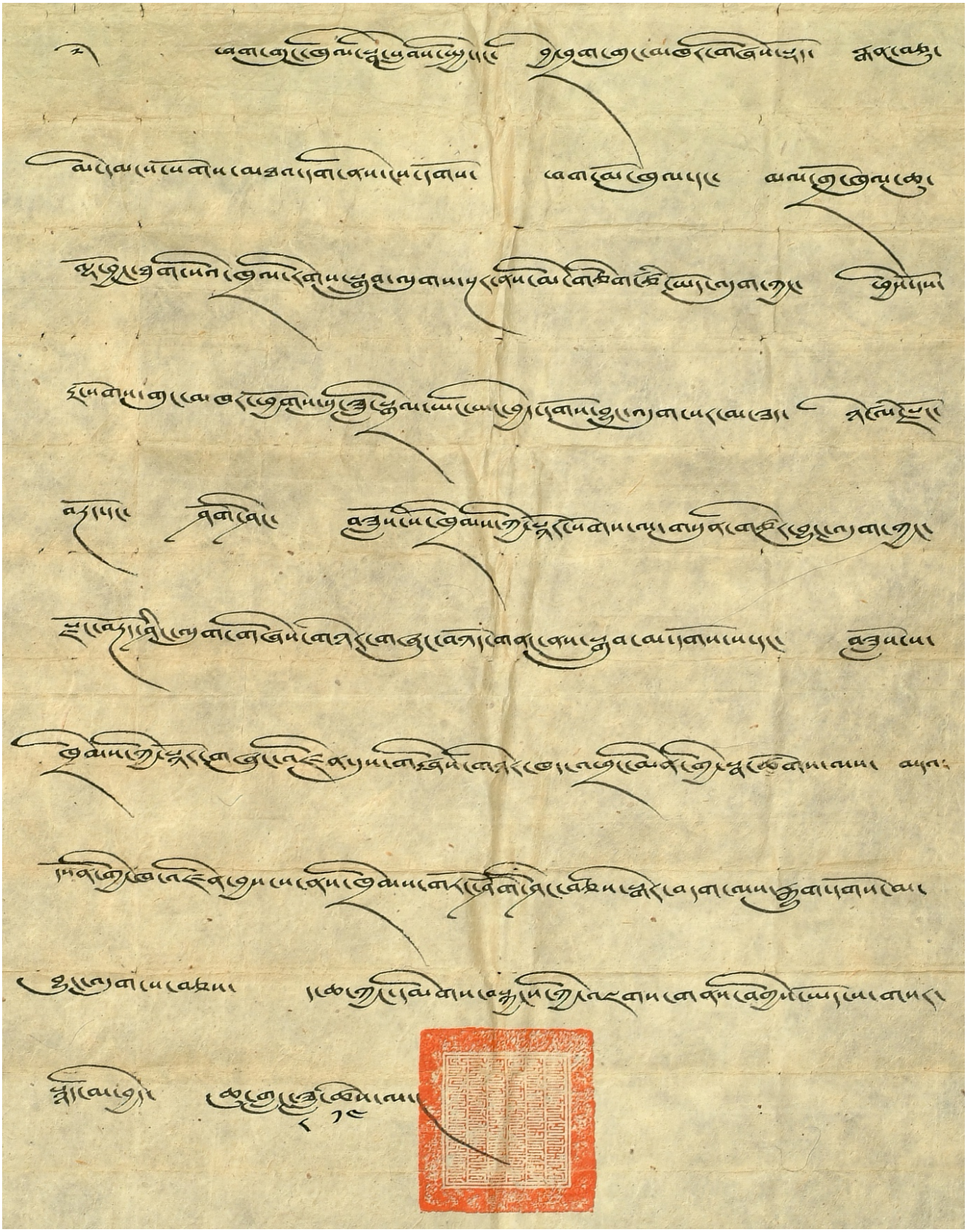
Impression from 1733 (*chu glang*).[188]



3.9 x 3.9 (2.8 x 2.9) cm

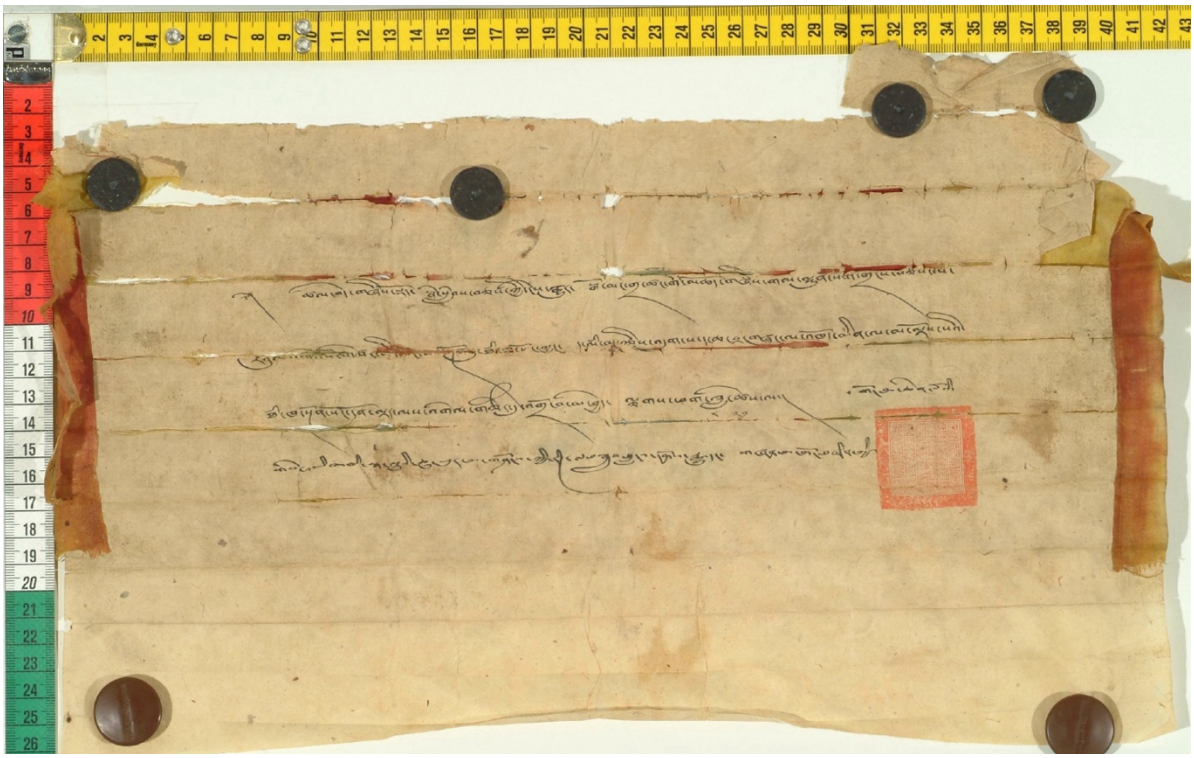


[188] LTWA: 0876_LTWA_55.

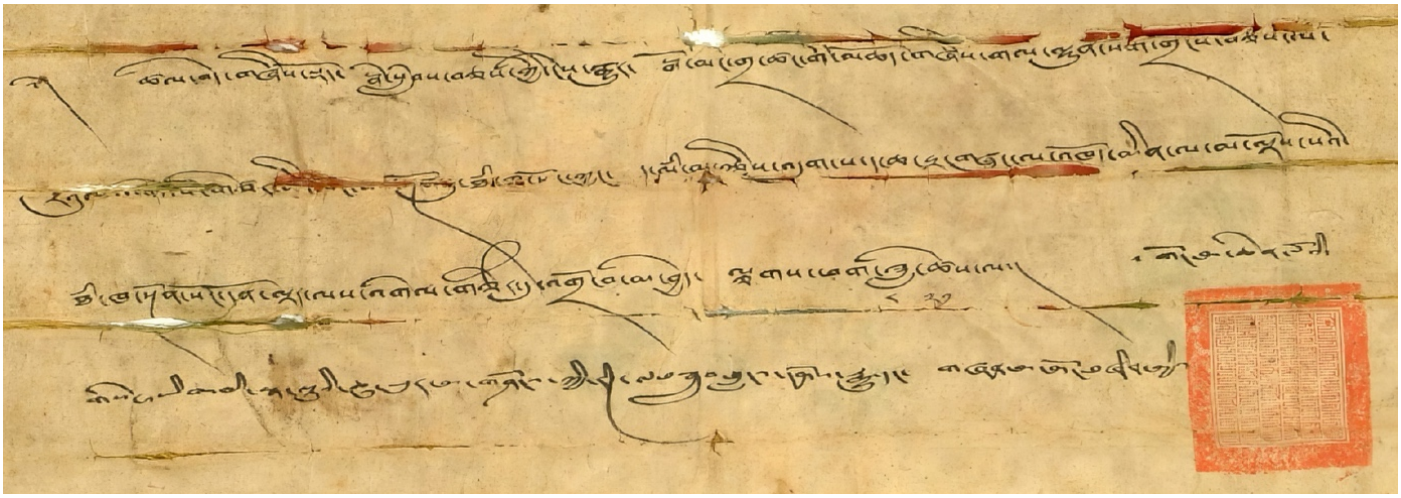


Impression from 1731 (*lcags phag*)[189]

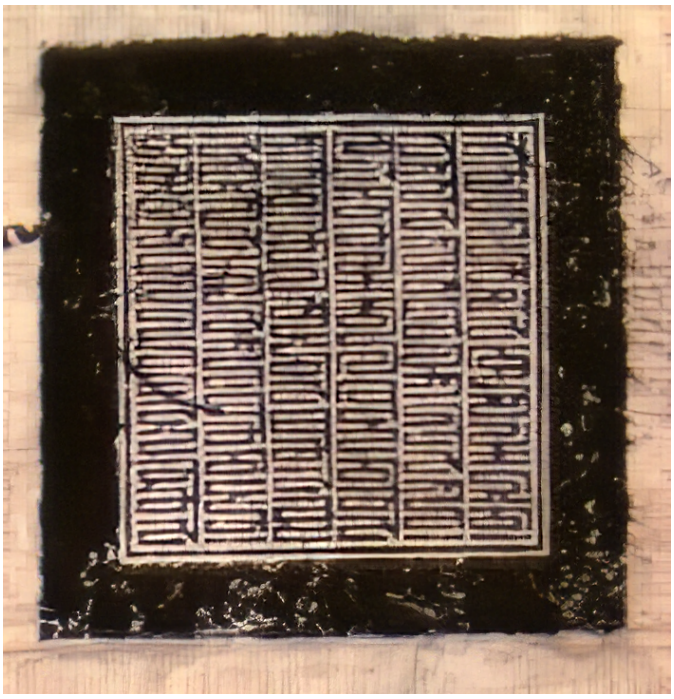
3.8 x 3.8 (2.8 x 2.8) cm



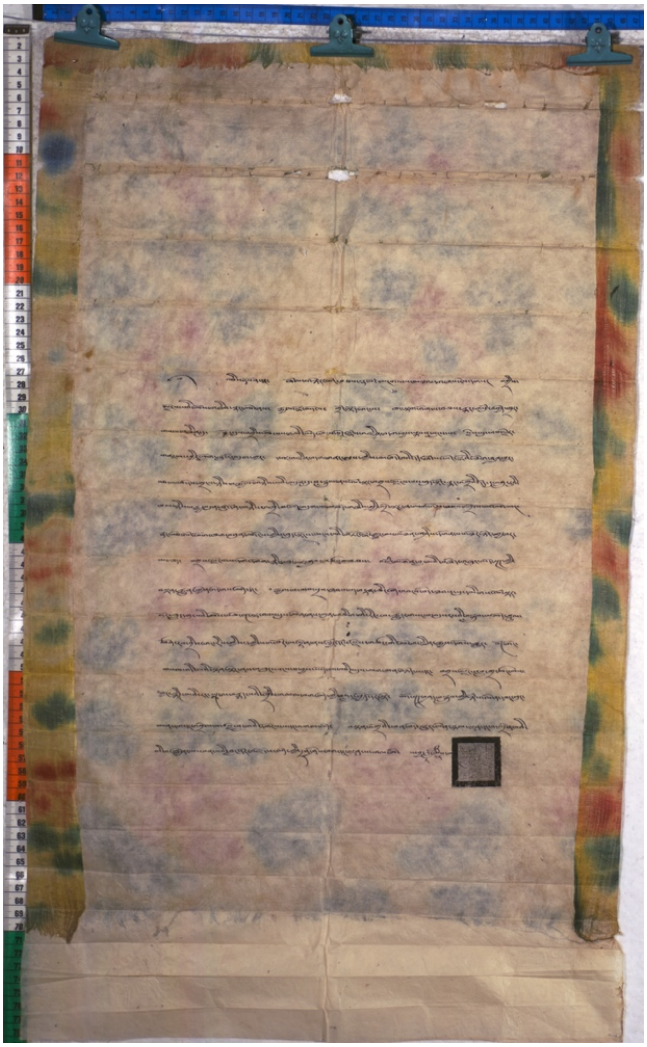
[189] AA: 0792_AA_2_1_160.



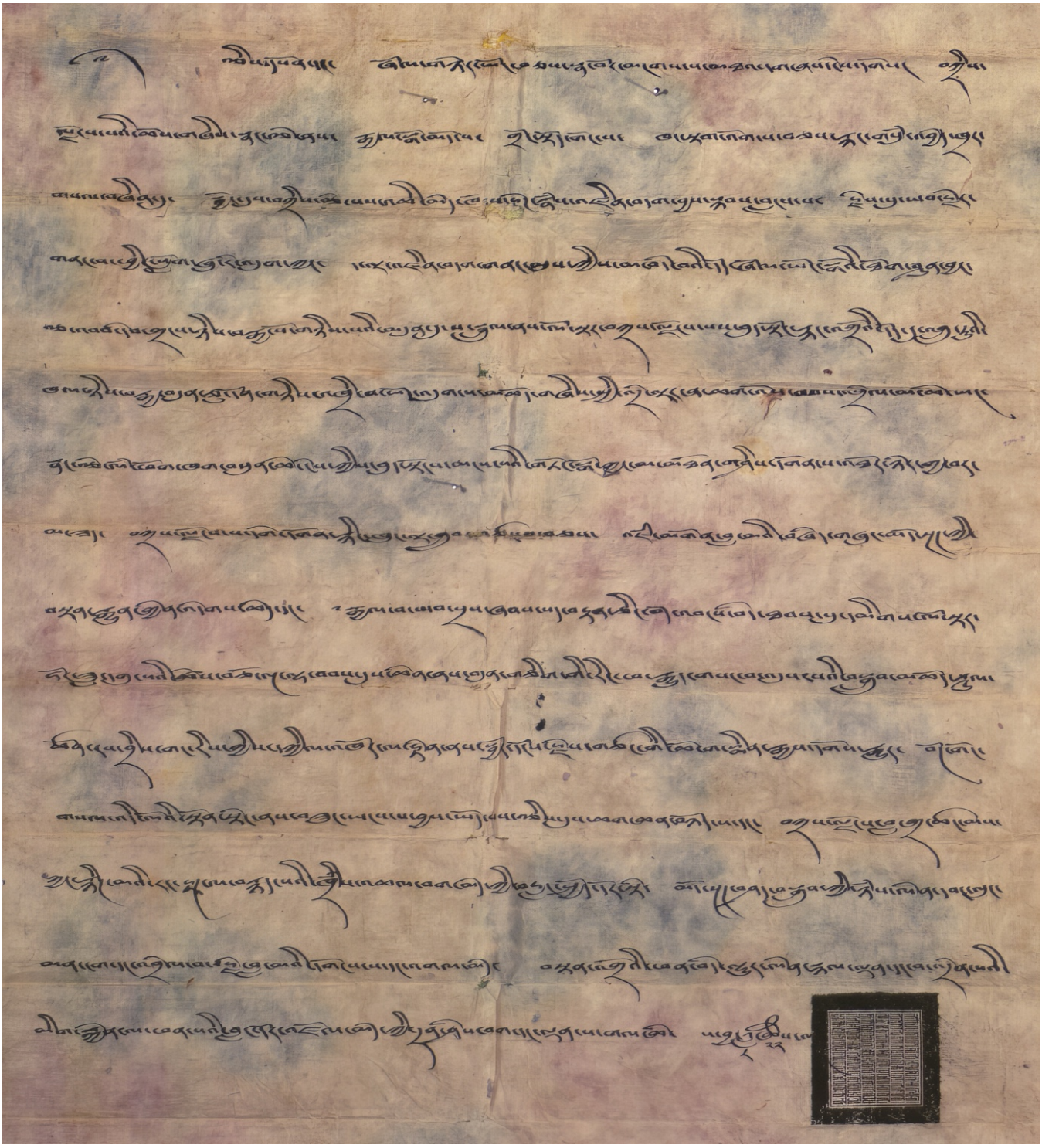
Impression from 1729 (*sa bya*)[190]



3.8 x 3.8 (2.8 x 2.8) cm



[190] KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/2/4 (ID 1214).



The inscription reads:

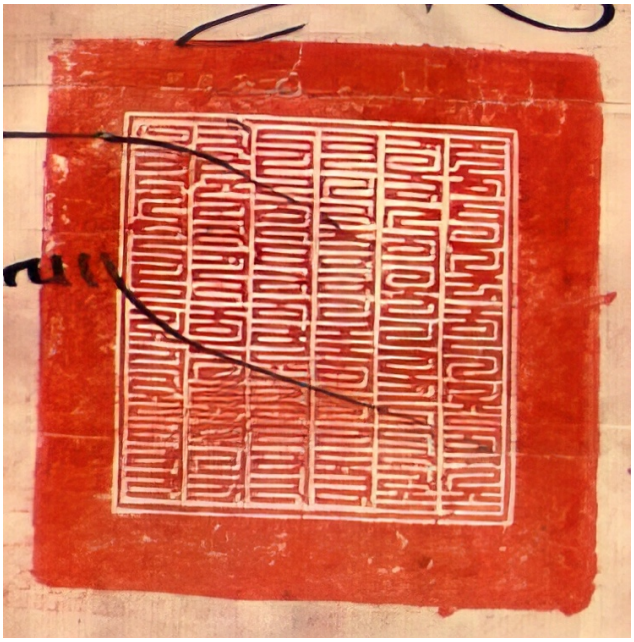
(1) *Z pho lha tha'i ji bsod nams*
(2) *stobs rgyas kyi tham ga don*
(3) *kun grub pa phyogs thams cad*
(4) *las rnam par rgyal zhing gnas*
(5) *skabs kin {kun} ti {tu} bkra shis kyi/*
(6) *snang ba dam pas khyab par shog/*

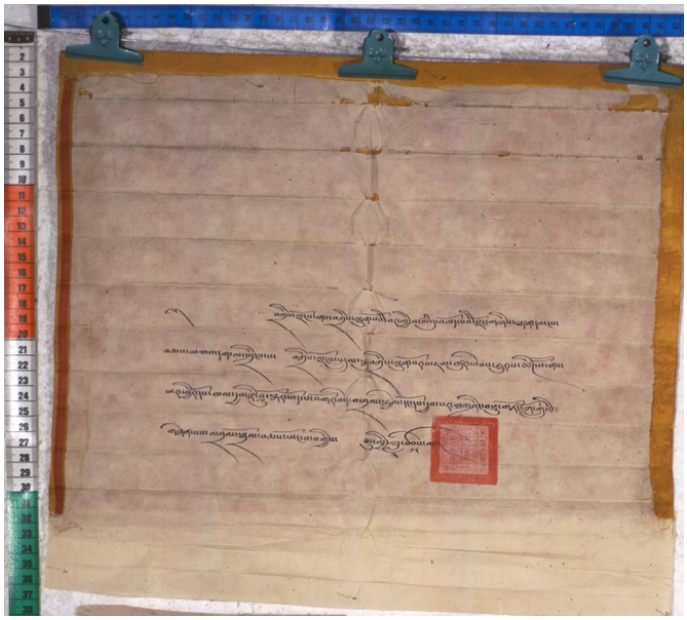
"Seal of Pho lha *tha'i ji* bSod nams stobs rgyas, through which all goals are achieved. May it be completely victorious over all directions and may it be covered with the holy light of fortune on all occasions!"

SEAL 50

The database contains four impressions of the third seal.[191] One more was published in Schuh 1981, 69. All impressions are red. They date between 1742 and 1745. The seal itself is now kept in a private collection. For a description and illustrations see Bertsch 2003, 2. For a tracing of the six-column seal inscription see Schuh 1981, 69–70.

Impression from 1742 (*chu khyi*)[192]

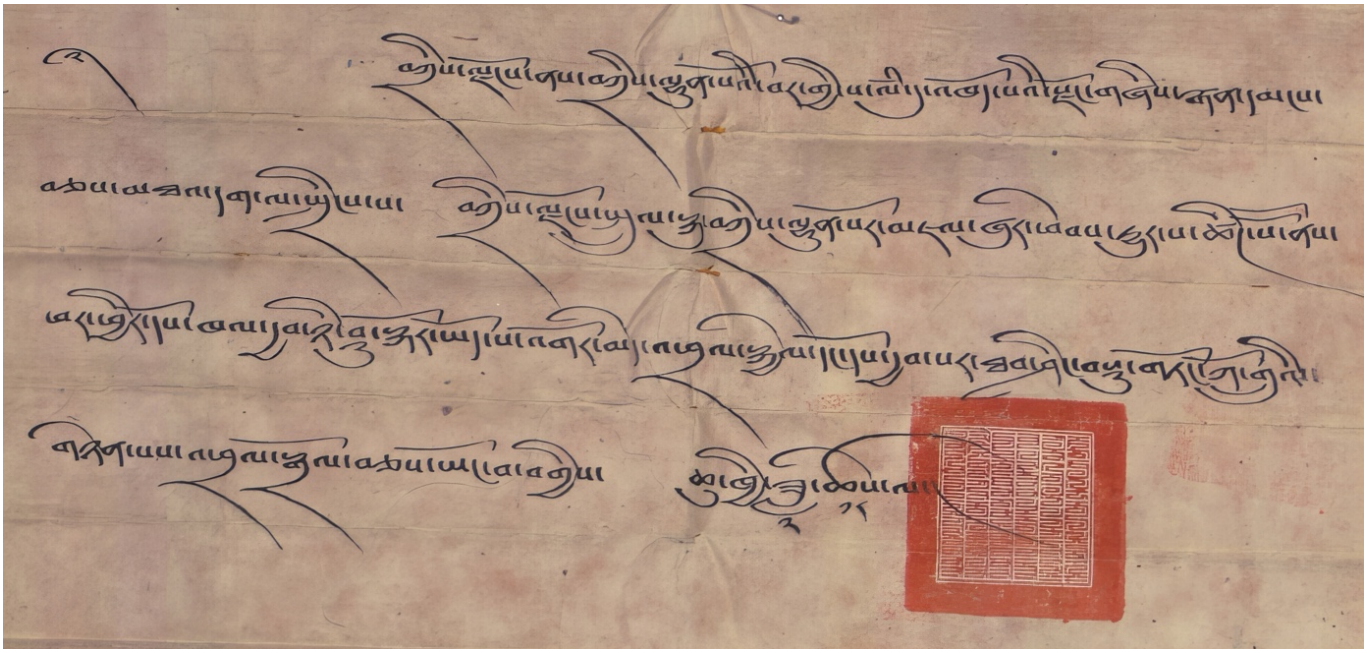




4.3 x 4.3 (3.2 x 3.2) cm

[191] KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/5/4 (ID 1217); KDL: 012 2-1/#/19/1/4 (ID 1223); LTWA: 0818_LTWA_10; KDL: 012 2-1/#/115/9/4 (ID 2331).

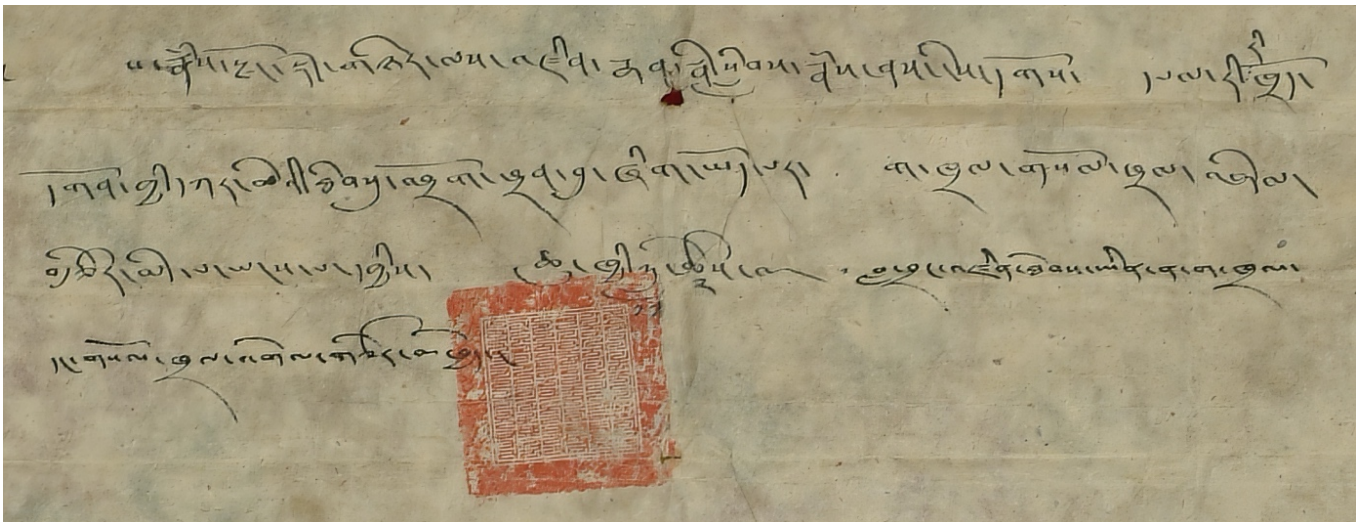
[192] KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/5/4, (ID 1217). The measurement of 6.5 cm given in Zhu Detao 2020a, 90, is incorrect.



Impression from 1742 (*chu khyi*)[193]

4.5 x 4.5 (3.2 x 3.2) cm

[193] LTWA: 0818_LTWA_10.



The inscription reads:

(1) *Z mi'i dbang-po bsod nams*
(2) */ stobs kyi rgyal po pho lha*
(3) *dbang gi tham ga phyogs thams*
(4) *cad las rnam par rgyal ba don*
(5) *kun 'grub pa bkra shis so/*
(6) *rtag tu lha rgyal lo dge'o/*

"Seal of the ruler over men bSod nams stobs kyi rgyal po, the lord of Pho lha, which is completely victorious over all directions and through which all goals are achieved. May there be fortune! May the gods always be victorious! May it be virtuous!"

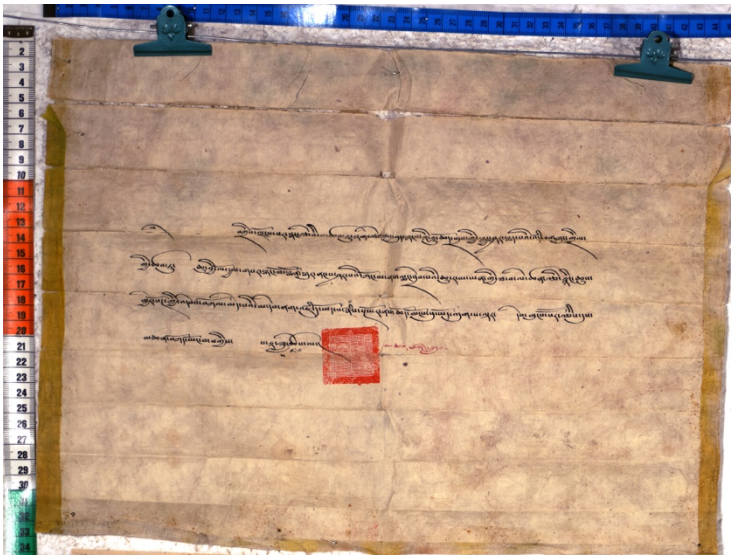
SEAL 51

Zhu Detao presents a fourth seal impression with an inscription in 'Phags pa script, which is said to come from another seal of Pho lha nas.[194] His description and the signature he provided do not match his illustration. However, the signature and description match a seal that belonged to Pho lha nas' son 'Gyur med rdo rje.[195] According to Zhu Detao, the seal inscription is only partially legible. However, Zhu Detao's description is confusing in that on the one hand he states that the seal inscription is only partially legible, but on the other hand he presents a transliteration of the inscription of the erroneously inserted image, which obviously comes from a seal of the Tibetan Council of Ministers under Khang chen nas (1721–1727). Obviously, the description of two different seals has become confused here.

In his catalog, Schuh presents two impressions of 'Gyur med rnam rgyal's seal in question, which he was only partly able to decipher.[196] Altogether, our database contains seven impressions of that seal.[197] All of them are red. All impressions date from the time when 'Gyur med rnam rgyal's father Pho lha nas was still in power. A not very helpful rough sketch of the seal impression can be found in Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*.[198] Nevertheless, a reading of the seal inscription is added in *dbu can* script.

Seal impression from 1738 (*sa rta*)[199]

3.6 x 3.6 (2.8 x 2.7) cm



[194] Zhu Detao 2020a, 90, 91: image no. 4.

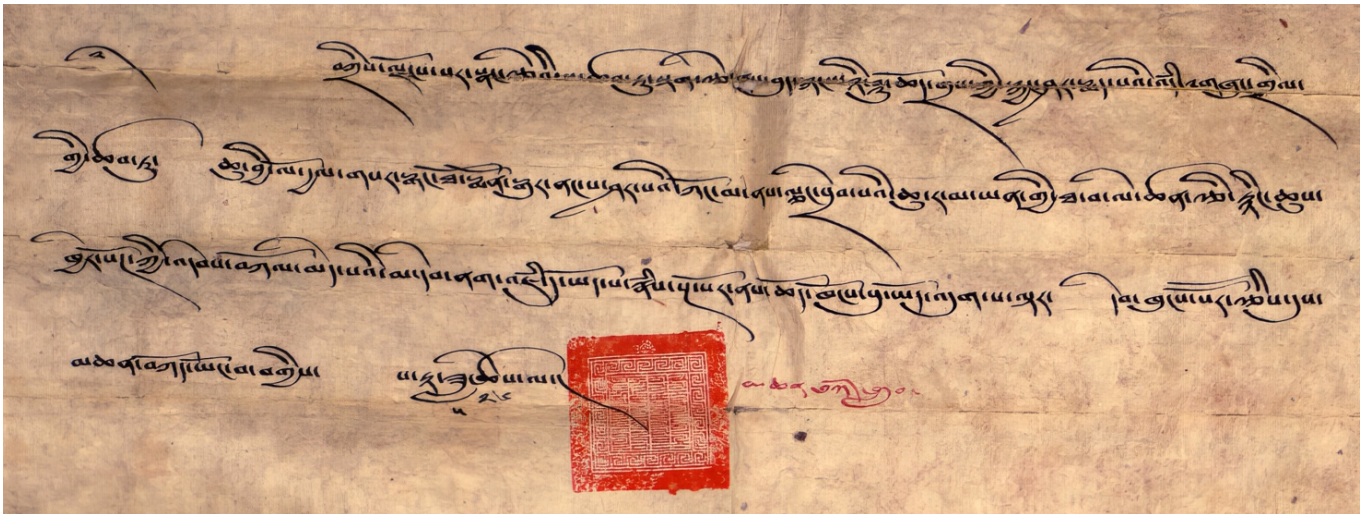
[195] KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/2/4 (ID 1214).

[196] Schuh 2018, 165–166.

[197] KDL: 012 2-1/#/48/1/4 (ID 1512); KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/9/4 (ID 1221); KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/6/4 (ID 1218); KDL: 012 2-1/#/20/1/4 (ID 1233); KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/8/4 (ID 1122); KDL: 012 2-1/#/20/2/4 (ID 1234); KDL: 012 2-1/#/52/2/4 (ID 1553).

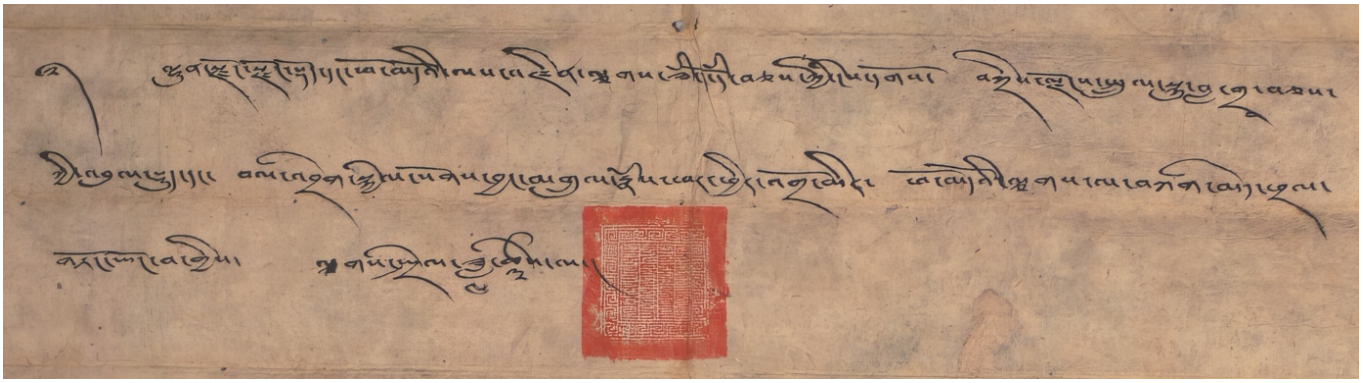
[198] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 62.

[199] KDL: 012 2-1/#/48/1/4 (ID 1512).



Seal impression from 1740 (*lcags sprel*)[200]

3.5 x 3.7 (2.7 x 2.8) cm



The inscription of the seal reads:

[200] KDL: 012 2-1/#/18/9/4 (ID 1221).

(1) *Z dah la'(i) ba' thur*
(2) *da'i ching gi tham*
(3) *ga phyogs thams cad*
(4) *las rgyalo*

"Seal of Dalai Batur Daiching that is victorious over all directions."

'Gyur med rnam rgyal was known early on by his Mongolian title Dalai Batur.[201]

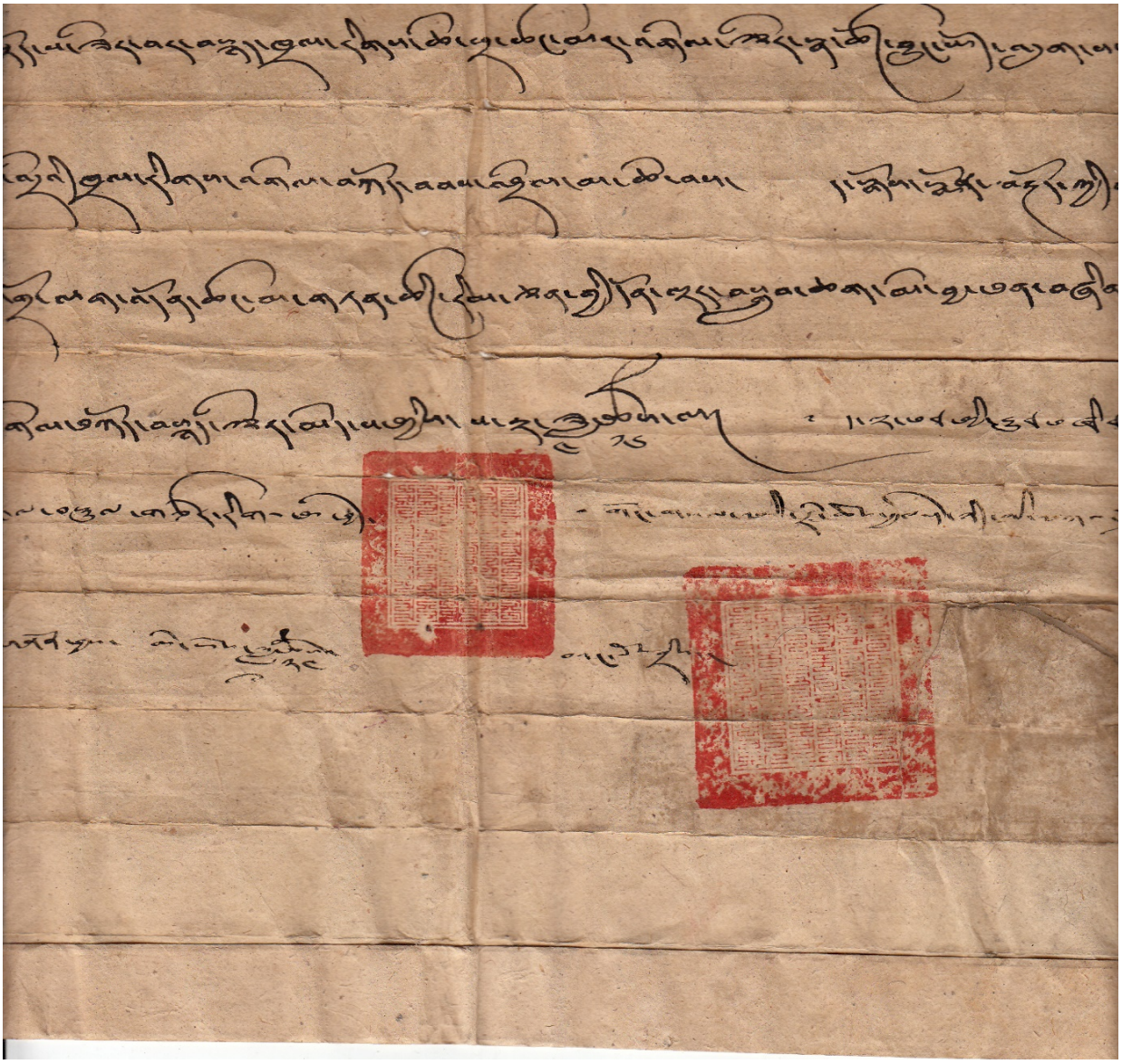
This seal is not identical with another four-column seal of 'Gyur med rnam rgyal, the impression of which is depicted in Schuh 1981 (67, 103–104). Even if the seal inscription is barely legible, it is clear not only from Schuh's reconstruction, but also from the deviating frame pattern and the few clearly recognizable letters that these are two different seals.

Zhu Detao also lists the impression of a round seal with a one-column inscription in 'Phags pa script, which he attributes to Pho lha nas.[202] Schuh has identified this seal as the seal of Tshe ring dbang rgyal,[203] minister under Pho lha nas and author of Pho lha nas' biography, the *Mi dbang rtogs brjod*.[204]

SEAL 52

I have at my disposal an excerpt from a privately owned document which, in addition to an impression of one of Pho lha nas' seals (SEAL 49) dated June 3, 1738 (*sa rta zla* 4 *tshes* 16), shows at the end of a confirmation note the impression of another six-column seal of his son 'Gyur med rnam rgyal dated October 23, 1747 (*me yos zla* 9 *tshes* 20). Based on the known dimensions of SEAL 49, I estimate the side length of its outer edges to be between 4.6 and 4.9 cm.

[201] Petech 1972, 175.
[202] Zhu Detao 2020a, 92, 91: image no. 11. The image is taken from KHD: 0845_KHD.
[203] Schuh 2018, 160. The document itself does not mention the name of the seal holder. I assume that Schuh had another source available for identification. Schuh gives the correct decipherment of the seal inscription.
[204] Petech 1972, 3,148.



The seal is listed in the catalog included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, including a transliteration of the inscription.[205] However, a comparison reveals that the sketch depicted there is inaccurate and incorrect:

[205] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 62.

The transliteration in the seal catalog of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* is correct except for the second syllable in the second column. The catalog writes *gtsan* but the impression clearly shows *gdun*.

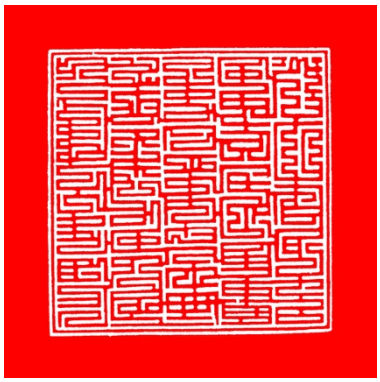
(1) *Z mi'i dbang po pho lha tho*
(2) *run gdun dbang da la'i ba'*
(3) *thur ta'i ching 'gyur med*
(4) *rnam par rgyal ba'i tham ga*
(5) *phyogs dus gnas skabs*
(6) *kun tu rgyal gyur cig*

"Seal of the ruler over men Pho lha Tho run gdun dbang Dalai Bathur Daiching 'Gyur med rnam rgyal. May it be victorious in all directions, times and circumstances!"

According to the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 'Gyur med rnam rgyal was awarded rank and title of *tho run jun wang* by the Emperor in the fourth Tibetan month of the Fire Hare year (May/June 1747).[206] *Tho run jun wang*, written in the seal inscription as *tho run gdun dbang*, is the transcription of a Qing title that was written in Manchu *doroi giyûn wang* and in Chinese *duo luo jun wang* (多羅郡王). The term is a combination of Manchu *doro*, meaning "norm, right conduct", and Chinese *jun wang*, denoting a prince of the second rank or commandery prince. The title had already been awarded to 'Gyur med rnam rgyal's father. On his seal it was written in Tibetan as *dho ros khyung dbang*.[207] According to Schuh, that seal was later also used by 'Gyur med rnam rgyal.[208]

The catalog of the Tibet Museum in Lhasa presents two images of a beautiful seal "made of metal, gold and wood."[209] Its square stamp has a side-length of 5 cm and shows six columns of 'Phags pa letters. A seal impression is not provided, which makes deciphering the inscription difficult. As far as I can tell, however, the inscription contains no reference to 'Gyur med rnam rgyal as the owner of the seal. The beginning of the inscription rather suggests a seal owner in eastern Tibet: *Z mdo khams yongs kyi phan bde'i ....*[210]

Another seal used by Pho lha nas, which apparently shows an inscription in a pseudo-script, is described under SEAL 29 (pp. 76—77).



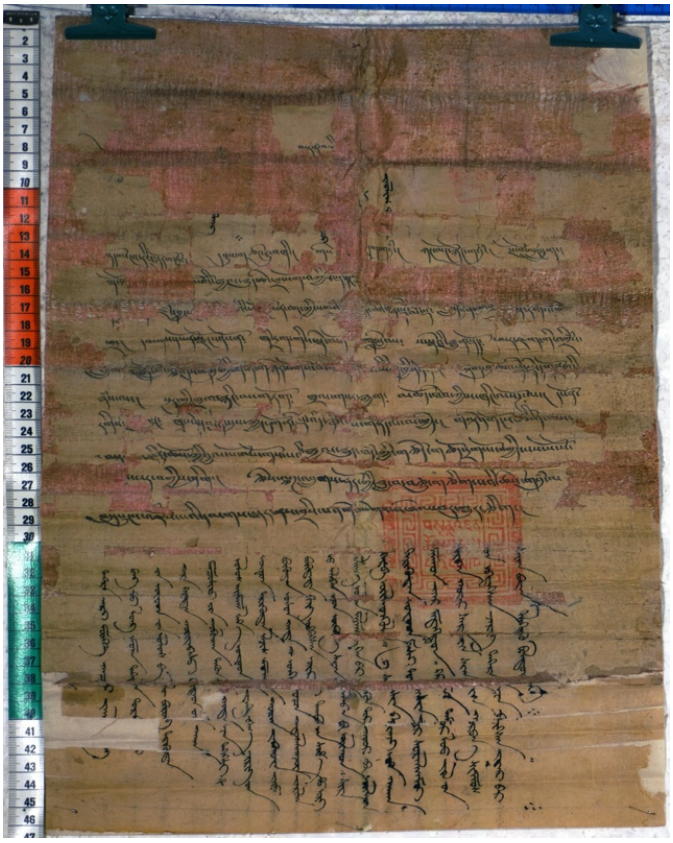
[206] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 16, PDF 18.
[207] Schuh 1981, 72.
[208] Schuh 1981, 103.
[209] Tenzin Namgyal et al. 2001, 141, no. 3.
[210] To read the inscription the photo must be mirrored vertically.

2.4 Gushri Khan's Seal with dBu can Script

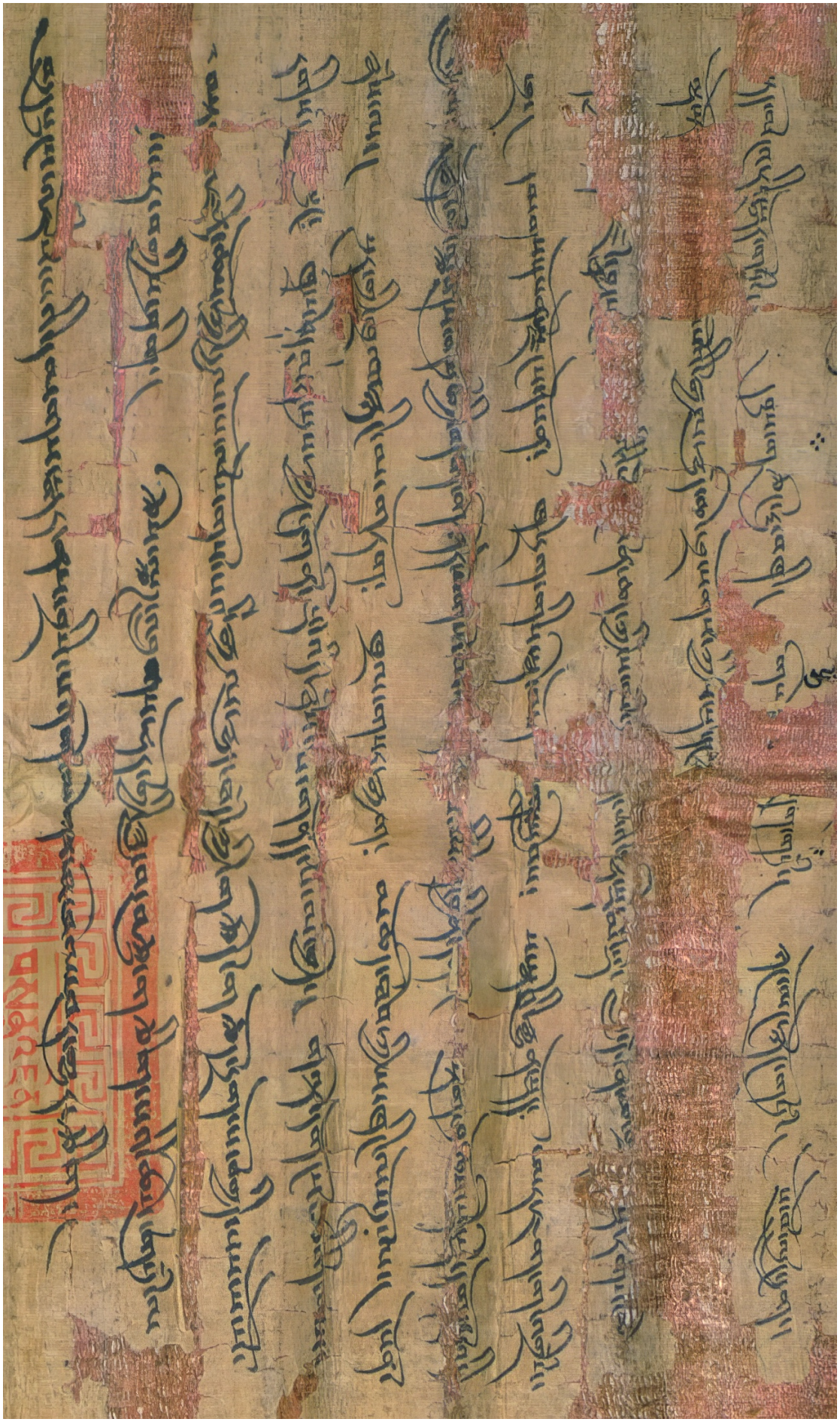
SEAL 53

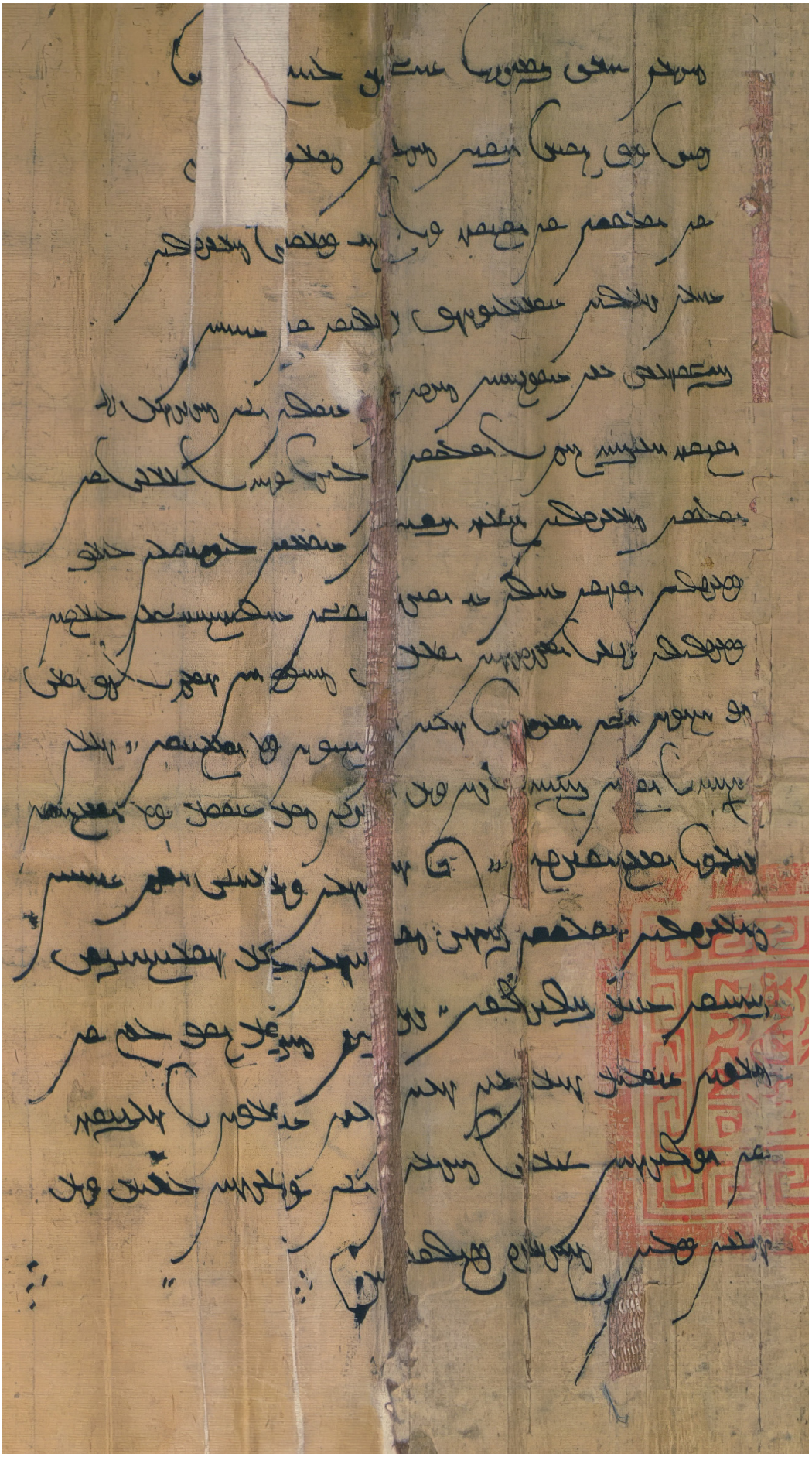
To date, only one ruler's seal from the seventeenth century is known, which has an inscription in the Tibetan *dbu can* script. The seal belonged to Gushri Khan. Our database contains a document issued in 1640 that shows an impression of this seal.[211]

7.8 x 7.5 (6.5 x 6.1) cm



[211] KDL: 012 2-1/#/3/4/3 (ID 1004). For an analysis of the document and a Chinese translation see Wuyun Bilige and Daowei·Cairangjia 2013. For a clarification of the dating of the document, see Schwieger, forthcoming 2025a.





The three-line inscription reads:

(1) *bstan 'dzin*
(2) *chos kyi rgyal*
(3) *po'i dam kha*

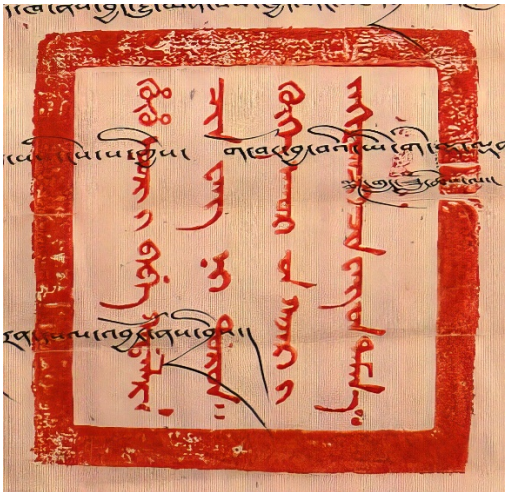
"Seal of bsTan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po."

Title and seal were granted to Gushri Khan by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1637.[212]

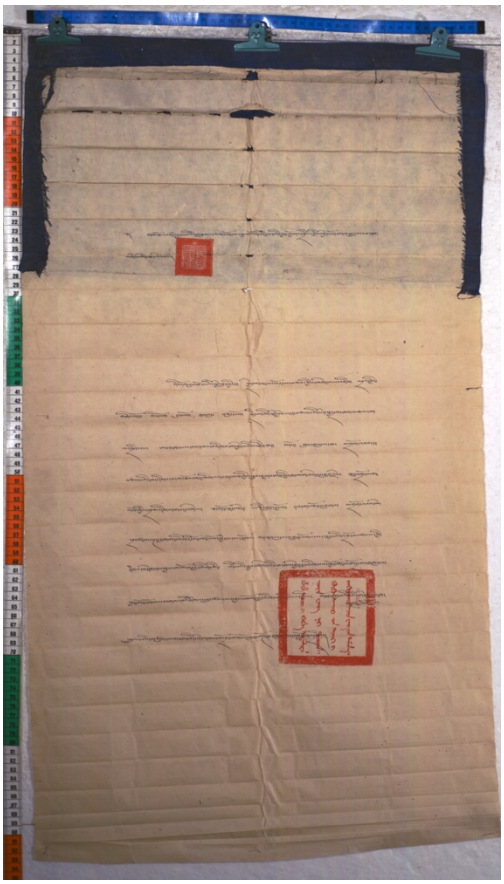
2.5 A Few Multilingual Seal Inscriptions from the dGa' ldan pho brang Era

SEAL 54

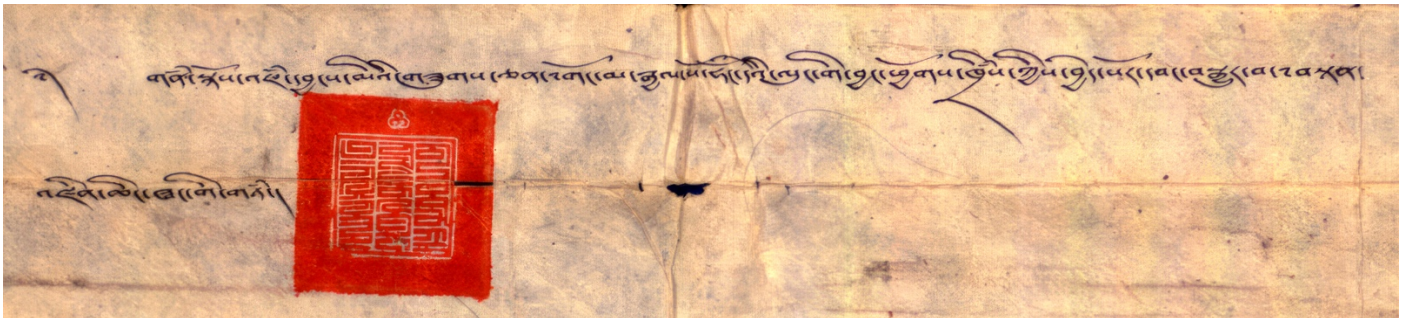
When functioning as a leading member of the provisional military government in Lhasa the Khoshot chief Lopsang Danjin alias Blo bzang bstan 'dzin (born 1692) issued in 1721 (*lcags glang*) a decree that shows two different seal impressions, a smaller one with 'Phags pa letters (SEAL 72) and a larger one with a four-column Manchu-Mogolian inscription.[213] Both seals belonged to Lopsang Danjin.

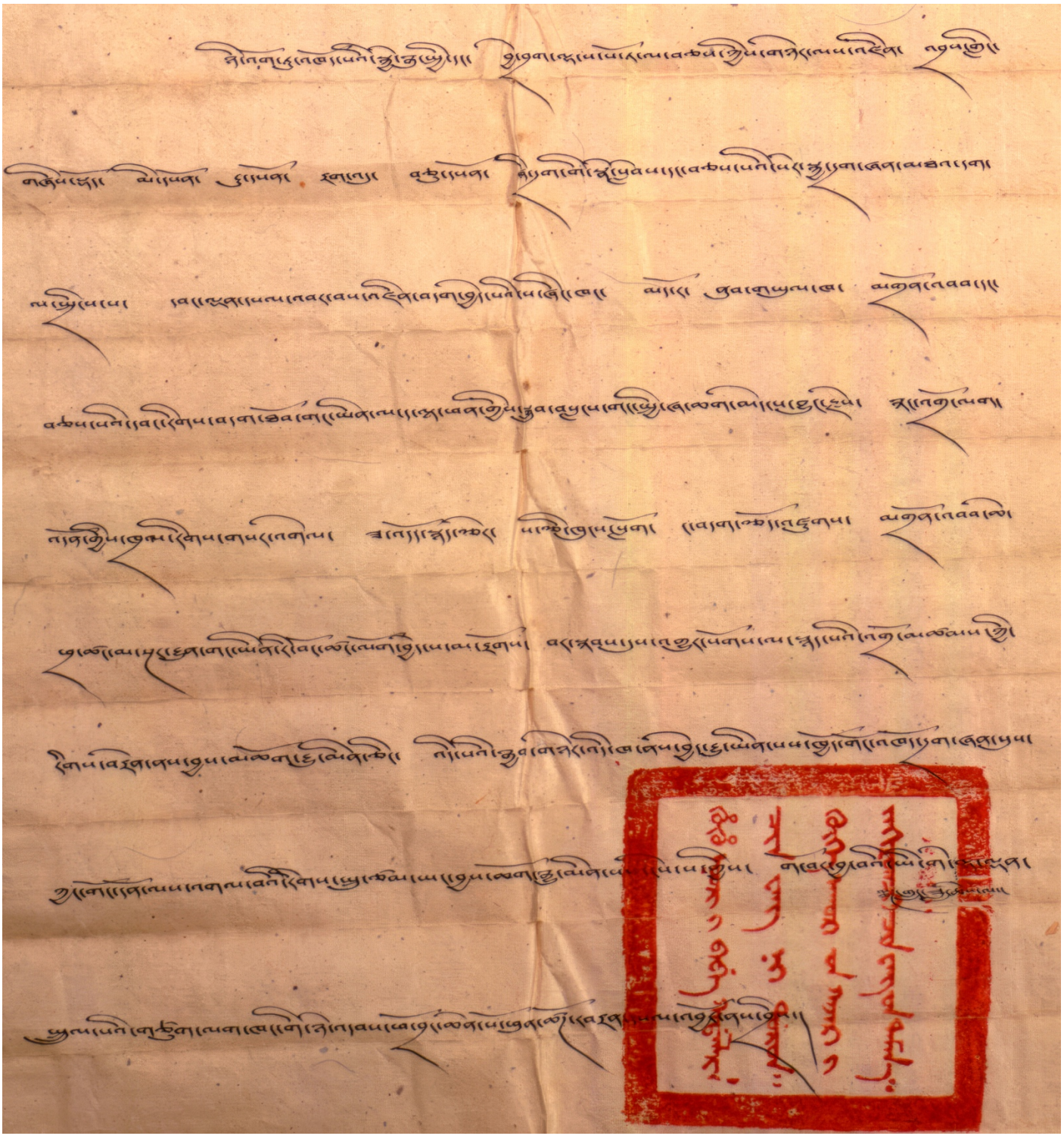


10.8 x 10.8 (8.7 x 8.7) cm



[212] See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1989, vol. I, 170; Karmay 2014: 130.
[213] KDL: 012 2-1/#/38/5/4 (ID 1409).





The Manchu inscription on the left reads:

(1) *huhu noor-i babe kadalara*
(2) *cin wang-ni doron*

The Mongolian inscription on the right reads:

(1) *köke nayur-un γaǰar-i*
(2) *ǰakiruγč i čin wang-un tamaγ-a*

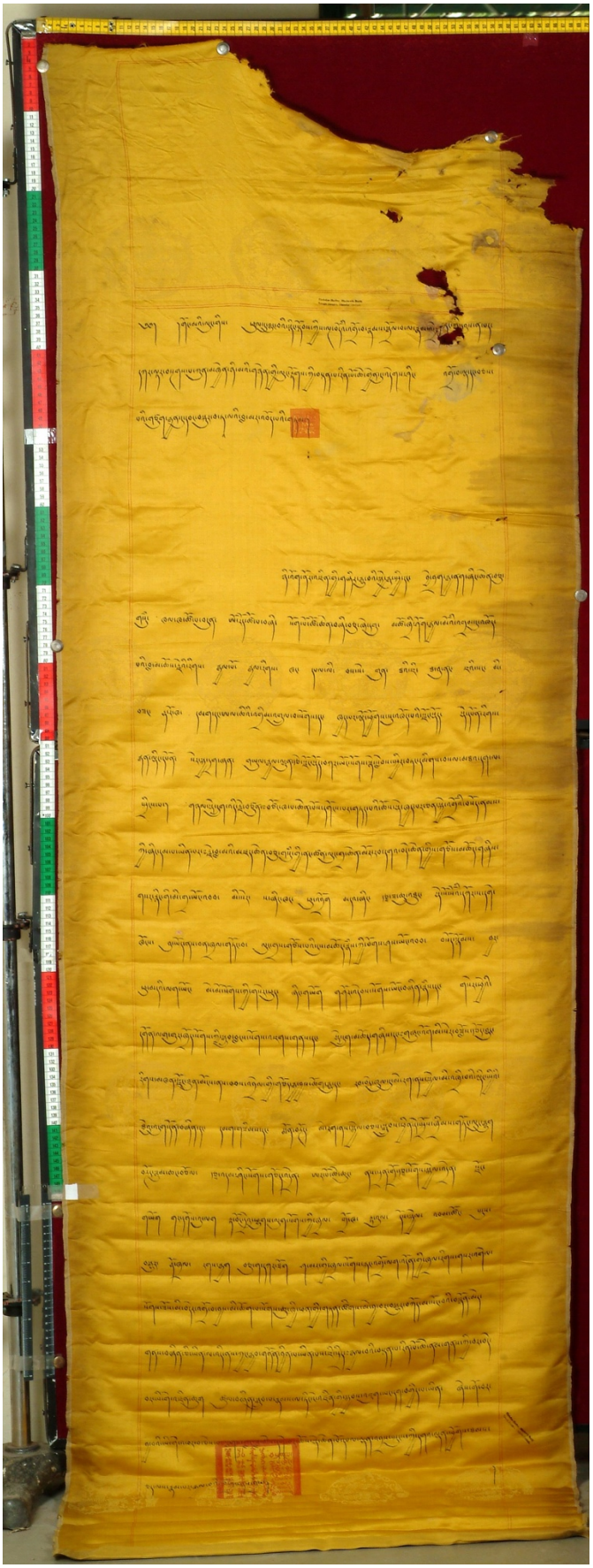
"Seal of the *qinwang* who governs the Kokonor area."[214]

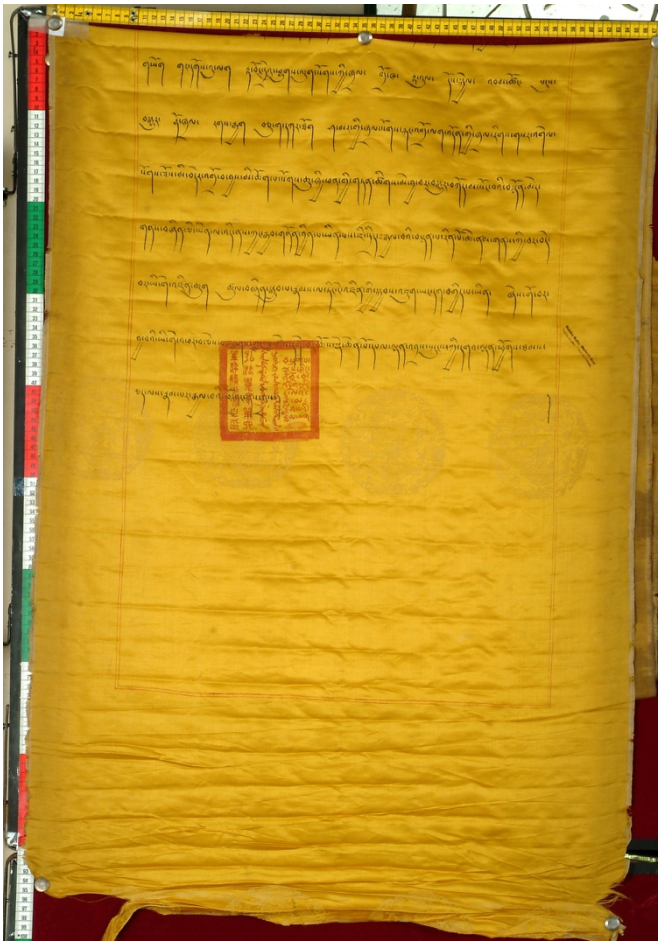
SEAL 55

Seal impression of the earlier seal of the Seventh Dalai Lama sKal bzang rgya mtsho from 1721 (*lcags glang*), which counts him as the Sixth Dalai Lama[215]

11 x 11 (9.1 x 9.1) cm

[214] The inscription has been transliterated and translated by Borjigidai Oyunbilig. It was published in Schwieger 2015, 267n84.
[215] LTWA: 0950_LTWA_162. For the award of this seal by the emperor, see Schwieger 2015, 125–127; Schwieger 2021, 50.





Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 289—291.

The Chinese inscription is written in the small Chinese seal script, *xiao zhuan*. It reads from right to left:

(1) *hongfa jue zhong di liu* (弘法覺衆第六)
(2) *bei da lai lama zhi yin* (輩達賴喇嘛之印)

"Seal of the Sixth Dalai Lama, who propagates the (Buddhist) doctrine and awakens the sentient beings."

The Manchu inscription reads:

(1) *šajin be mandubure ergengge be yarhūdara*
(2) *ningguci jalan i dalai lama i doron*[216]

"Seal of the Sixth Dalai Lama, through whom the doctrine (of the Buddha) flourishes and who guides the sentient beings."

The Tibetan inscription contains a syllable in the last line with the syllable *ma*, which makes no sense and should be deleted as superfluous. In the tracing contained in the catalog included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, which was edited and published by Chab spel and Ma grong, this syllable is missing.[217] The inscription reads:

(1) *bstan pa*
(2) *rgyas shing*
(3) *'gro ba*
(4) *'dren pa'i*
(5) *tā la'i*
(6) *bla ma*
(7) *drug pa'i*
(8) *tham ma ka*

"Seal of the Sixth Dalai Lama, through whom the doctrine (of the Buddha) flourishes and who guides the sentient beings."

SEAL 56a and SEAL 56b

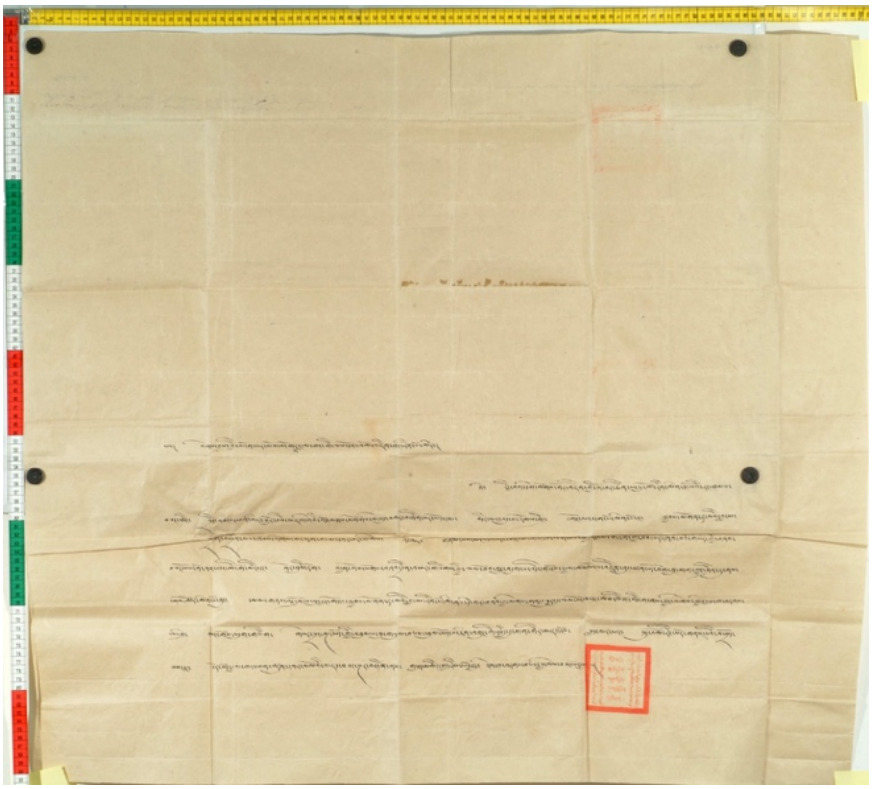
The regents (*rgyal tshab*) who held office in Lhasa from the mid-eighteenth century onwards used a large silver seal granted by the emperor with an inscription in three languages: Manchu, Tibetan and Mongolian. There existed at least two varieties of this seal. They do not differ in their inscription but

[216] I owe the transliteration and translation of the Manchurian text to Borjigidai Oyunbilig.
[217] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 39.

have small differences in the script style and text arrangement. For example, in the Tibetan text of the two seal impressions depicted below, compare the distance of the first line to the top margin.

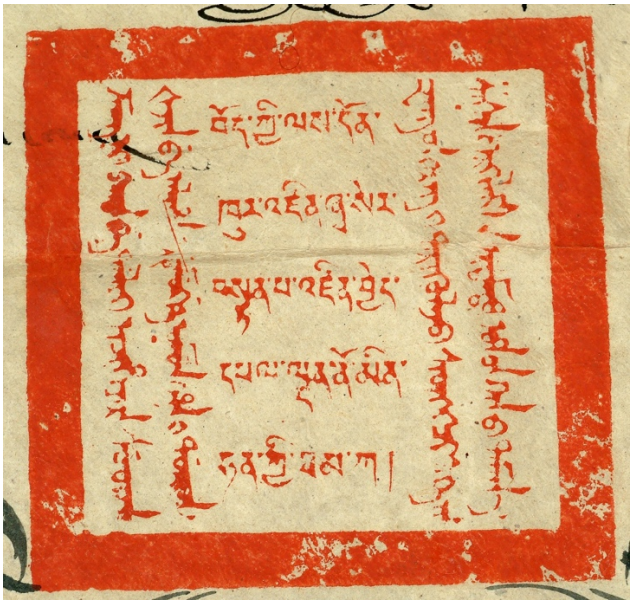
Undated impression of SEAL 56a[218]

7.8 x 7.8 (6.4 x 6.4) cm



[218] KHD: 0454_KHD_S105.

Impression of SEAL 56b from 1814 (*shing khyi*)[219]

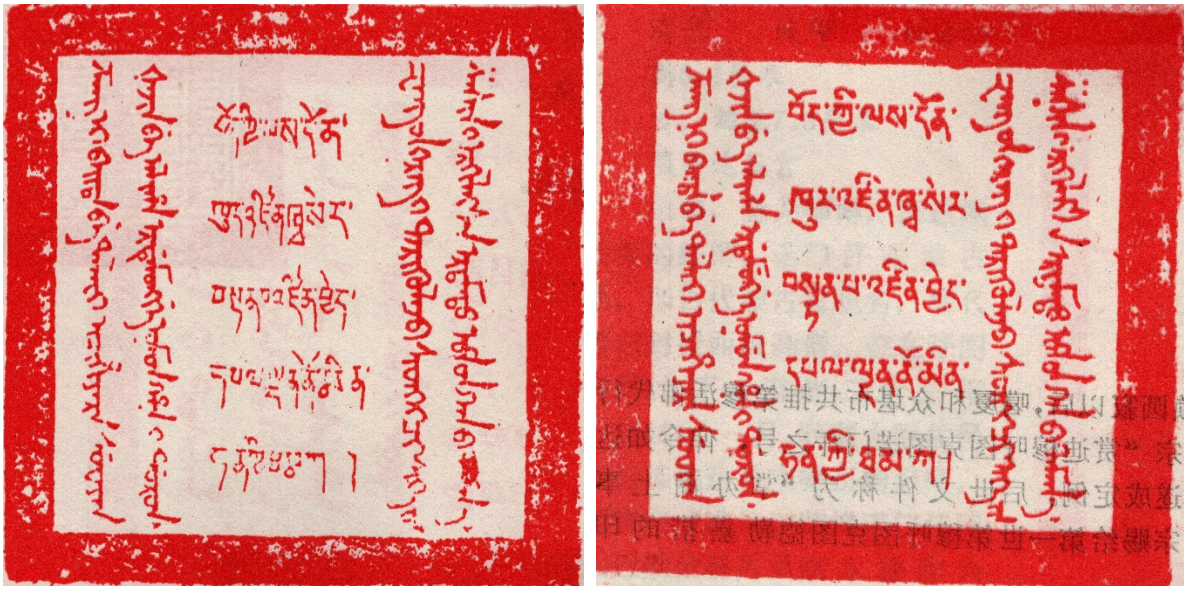


7.8 x 7.7 (6.4 x 6.4) cm

Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 292—295.

[219] LTWA: 0946_LTWA_158 (For an analysis and translation of the document see Schwieger 2024).

The differences correspond exactly to the differences between two seal impressions published by Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei.[220]



According to their explanations, the impression on the left with the somewhat awkward writing of the letter *ma* in the syllable *tham* belongs to the original silver seal, while the second impression, which is characterized by a more uniform writing overall, can be attributed to an iron seal with a wooden knob. The silver seal has a height of 6.8 cm, the iron seal has a height of 14 cm. The square stamp of both seals has a side length of 7.9 cm.

A transliteration and translation were first published by Schuh.[221]

The Manchu inscription reads:

(1) *zang-ni bayita-be dalji icihiyara suwayan*
(2) *šajin-be aliha erdemungge nomun han-i doron*

The Tibetan inscription reads:

(1) *bod kyi las don*
(2) *khur 'dzin zhwa ser*
(3) *bstan pa 'dzin byed*
(4) *dpal ldan no min*
(5) *han kyi tham ka/*

[220] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 89, 90.

[221] Schuh 1981, 108–109, 306n62. The Manchu and Mongolian text was transliterated and translated by Michael Weiers. The seal impression shown by Schuh corresponds to the second variant of the seal. Schuh refers to a document he published in 1976 as his source. Although the seal impression found there comes from the same seal, it obviously does not come from the same document as the impression published in 1981 (Schuh 1976, 228, document no. LXXI).

The Mongolian inscription reads:

(1) *cang-un kereg-i terigüleǰü sedkigči sira-yin*
(2) *šašin-i erkilegsen erdemtü nom-un qan-u tamaγ-a*

Translated into English the Tibetan text reads:
"Seal of the glorious No min Han, who bears the responsibility for Tibetan affairs and holds the teaching of the yellow hats."

The translation of the Manchu and Mongolian text reads:
"Seal of the virtuous *nomun han*, Head of the Yellow Teaching, Administrator of the affairs of gTsang."

SEAL 57

8.0 x 7.9 (7.0 x 7.0) cm

The seal impression above was probably imprinted on the monastic guidelines (*bca' yig*) by the first Tshe smon gling regent Ngag dbang tshul khrims (1721–1791, r. 1777–1786, 1791) in 1782 (*chu stag*).[222] However, the second Tshe smon gling regent Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho (1792–

[222] LTWA: 0952_LTWA_164.

1855, r. 1819–1844) cannot be completely ruled out as the owner of the seal. Both held the title of *samadi baksi* (in Tibetan written as *samati pakṣi*). The date of issue would then be 1842. The document was written in the "great palace" (*pho brang chen po*) Thub bstan rnam rgyal tshe smon gling.

The seal impression shows from left to right an inscription in Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese. The Manchu text is written in Manchu seal characters (*manwen zhuanzi* 滿文篆字). The Chinese text is written in the small seal script (*xiao zhuan* 小篆). In addition, both scripts show the decorative variant of the so-called "Seal script of the circling stars" (*zhuan xiu zhuan* 轉宿篆). Its use goes back to an initiative of the Qianlong emperor.[223]

The transliteration of the Manchu text reads:

(1) *šajin be badarambure tacihiyan be wehiyere*
(2) *goroki be necihiyere samadi baksi i doron.*

The transliteration of the Mongolian text reads:

(1) *šašin-i badaraγuluγči surγal-i tetgügči qoladakin-i*
(2) *tübsidgegči samadi baγsi-yin tamaγ-a.*

The transliteration of the slightly corrupted Tibetan text reads:

(1) *bsdan {bstan} pa*
(2) *rgyasl {rgyas pa} dang*
(3) *bslab bya*
(4) *skyongs {skyong} byed*
(5) *ring pad {par}*
(6) *'tul {'dul} gyi*
(7) *sa ma ti*
(9) *pakṣi'i*
(10) *tham ka.*

The Chinese is written in the small seal script:

(1) *yanzong yijiao jing* (衍宗翊教靖)
(2) *yuan chanshi zhi yin* (远禅师之印).[224]

The common translation of the different versions is: "Seal of the meditation master who spreads the doctrine, supports the teaching and pacifies the distant land."

[223] See Stary 1980, 4–7, 105–107.

[224] I am greatly indebted to Borjigidai Oyunbilig for deciphering this seal inscription.

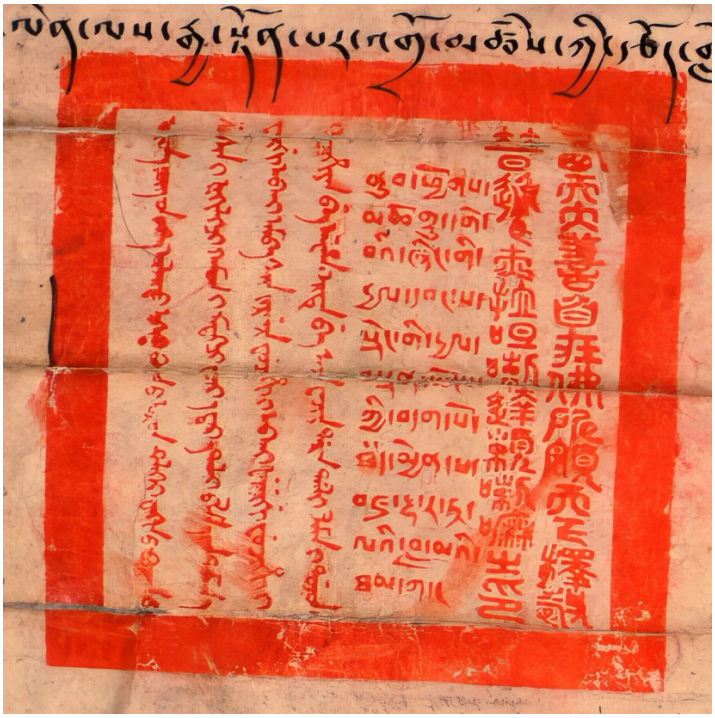
Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 296—304.

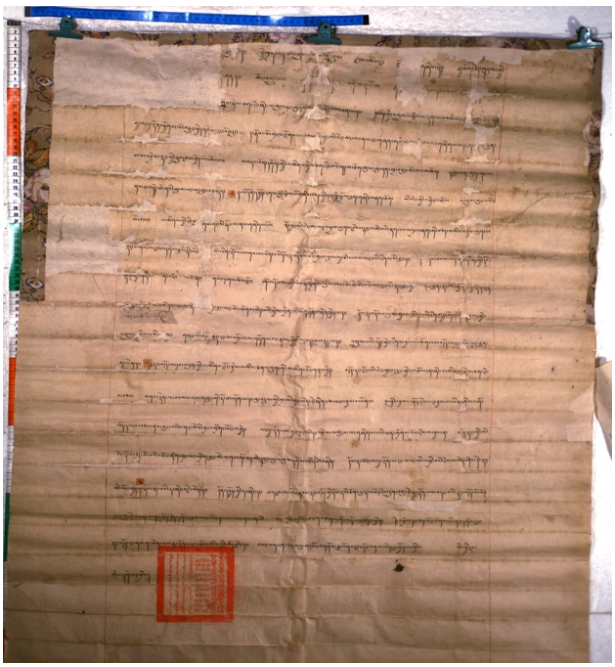
3. Once more on the Gold Seals of the Fifth and the Seventh Dalai Lama

SEAL 58 (= E1) and SEAL 59 (= E2)

In this chapter, I briefly return to the gold seals of the Fifth and the Seventh Dalai Lama, which I analyzed in detail in my contribution to the Festschrift for Dieter Schuh, in particular Schuh's attribution of the younger seal to the Fifth Dalai Lama, which Schuh named as E1 in his work on Tibetan seals.[225] The older seal, which the Fifth Dalai Lama received from the Shunzhi Emperor (順治, reign 1644–1661) in 1653 and which was later also used by his successor, the Sixth Dalai Lama, was named E2 by Schuh. For the sake of simplicity, the designations E1 and E2 are retained in this chapter. However, E1 and E2 appear in the count of this catalog as SEAL 58 and SEAL 59 and are listed accordingly in the index.

Seal impression of the Seventh Dalai Lama bsKal bzang rgya mtsho (SEAL 58, E1) from 1756 (*me byi*)[226]





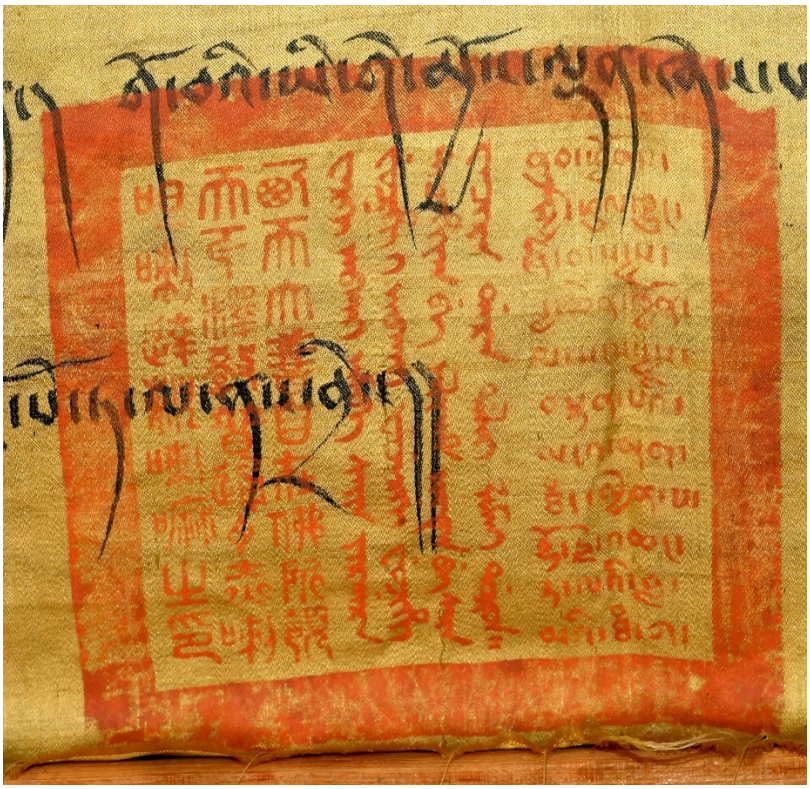
11.2 x 11.2 (9.1 x 9.1) cm

For enlarged images of the document see appendix 1, pp. 305—306.

[225] Schwieger 2022.

[226] KDL: 012 2-1/#/43/9/4 (ID 1460). For an edition and German translation of the inscriptions in Mongolian, Manchu, Tibetan and Chinese see Schuh 1981, 3, 46n20–23.

Seal impression of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tshang dbyangs rgya mtsho (SEAL 59, E2) from 1699 (*sa yos*)[227]



11,1 x 11,1 (8,9 x 8,9) cm

Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 307—308.

Since, according to my analysis, there is no strong evidence that would justify a clear attribution of E1 to the Fifth Dalai Lama, I argued at the end of my contribution that we should refrain from referring to E1 as a Fifth Dalai Lama's seal in order to avoid confusion. My argument was based primarily on the reinterpretation of a charter issued in the Iron Dog year and its redating from 1670 to 1730. To date, this is the earliest evidence for the use of E1. Schuh vehemently disagreed with my re-dating. In an email dated June 2, 2024, he summarized his arguments as follows (my translation, bold by Schuh):

> Regarding your findings on the Dalai Lama seal E1 and the Dalai Lama document from the lCags-khyi year, the librarian from Lhasa is unfortunately right. The librarian must necessarily have assumed that an issuer **who was in exile in a monastery in Lithang in 1729 with the Dalai Lamas' seal box and issued a travel permit there**, and who was then "honorably" interned east of there until 1735 (see Yannick and his sources), **could not have issued a document with a seal box in the Potala in Lhasa in 1730.** If the lCags khyi year is

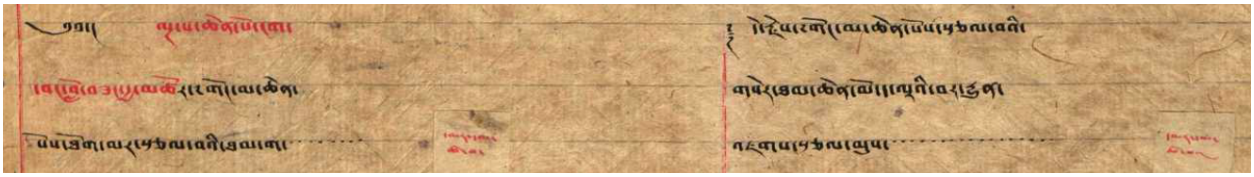
[227] LTWA: 1672_LTWA_890. For an edition and German translation of the inscriptions see Schuh 1981, 4—5, 47n25—27.

correct, the only remaining date is probably 1670. Other internal diplomatic features of the document and political circumstances speak against 1730.[228]

At first glance, the first argument, highlighted in bold by Schuh, looks particularly convincing. As can easily be shown, Schuh's conclusion is nonetheless premature. But of course, I should have discussed such an obvious objection the first time around. This will be made up for here in the context of a more comprehensive discussion, which also includes a more detailed analysis of the only generally accessible source to date and its interpretation, on which Schuh's attribution of the seal to the Fifth Dalai Lama is based. We will see that even in this only currently available source there is no clear statement that the emperor granted the Fifth Dalai Lama a second gold seal. This result will then be verified by analyzing not only the internal, but also the external features of the document presented in my contribution to Schuh's Festschrift.

3.1 The *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and Its Catalog on the Gold Seals E1 (SEAL 58) and E2 (SEAL 59)

I begin with a discussion of the relevant passages of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and its catalog of seals, the only source on which Schuh's attribution of the gold seal E1 to the Fifth Dalai Lama is based. The catalog contains two short, side-by-side entries for the two seals. The version available on BDRC lacks the corresponding illustrations:[229]



In the version accessible to Schuh, the illustration of E1 was mistakenly pasted next to the explanation of E2. The illustration of E2 was missing and the space next to the explanation of E1 was empty.[230]

Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the catalog contains only a correctly placed illustration of E2. The explanation of E1 is without an illustration.[231]

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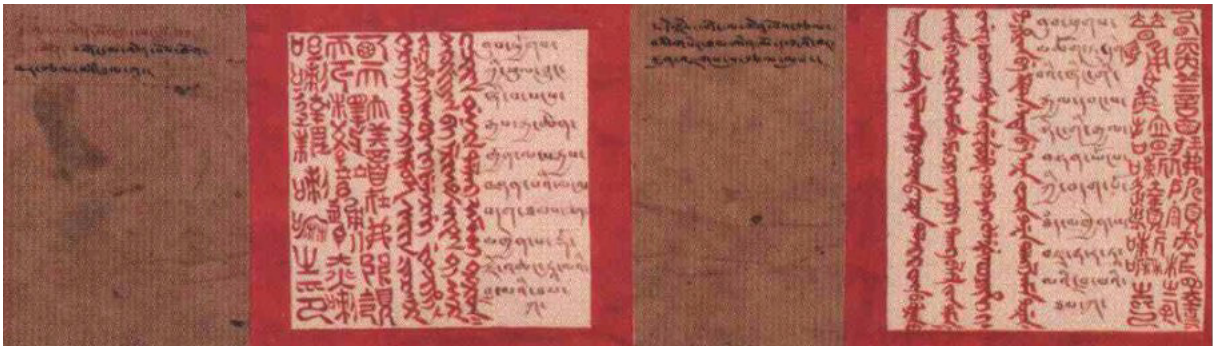
[228] "Zu Ihren Ergebnissen zu dem Dalai Lama Siegel E1 und der Dalai Lama-Urkunde aus dem LCags-khyi-Jahr hat der Bibliothekar aus Lhasa leider recht. Der Bibliothekar muss zwingend davon ausgegangen sein, dass ein Urheber, **der sich 1729 mit Siegelkasten der Dalai Lama in einem Kloster in Lithang in der Verbannung befand und dort ein Reisebegleitschreiben ausfertigte** und der danach bis 1735 östlich davon „ehrenvoll" interniert war (siehe Yannick und dessen Quellen), **nicht 1730 mit Siegelkasten im Potala in Lhasa eine Urkunde ausgefertigt haben kann.** Wenn die Jahresangabe lCags-khyi stimmt, bleibt wohl nur 1670. Gegen 1730 sprechen weitere innere diplomatische Merkmale des Dokuments und politische Gegebenheiten." „Yannick" refers to Laurent 2022.

[229] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 22r.

[230] Schuh 1981, 46n19.

[231] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 34–35.

Moreover, in the journal of the Tibetan Archives in Lhasa, a page of an unexplained seal catalog was reproduced, on which the images of both seals and the corresponding explanations can be seen. The illustration here merely serves to illustrate the various seal books kept in the archive, among them the seal book of the *bka' shag* and the seal book of the *yig tshang*. The seal books listed in the caption do not include the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and its catalog. Nevertheless, the explanations are identical in wording. The illustrations depicted do not show impressions of the original seals, but tracings whose layout clearly differs from the originals.



The entry on the left reads: *Zlnga pa chen po ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtshor Zgong ma chen pos thog mar stsal ba'i tham ga/* ("The seal first granted to the Great Fifth Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho by the Great Exalted One," i.e. the emperor of China). And the entry on the right reads: *de rjes Zgong ma chen pos stsal ba'i gser tham chen mo da lta'i bar rgyun 'jags stsal mus* ("The Great Gold Seal thereafter granted by the Great Exalted One. It is still commonly used today.").[232]

In my opinion, the two explanations allow two different interpretations: either that there is a seal granted first, and one granted later to the Fifth Dalai Lama, or that there is a seal granted first to the Fifth Dalai Lama and one granted later, of which it is not said at this point to which Dalai Lama it was given. Schuh obviously considers only the first interpretation to be possible.

Schuh quotes an explanation that can be found in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* itself: *de bzungs rtsa tshig sogs 'gangs che bar gser tham chen mo de dang/ la lar gser gyi rgyal por grags pa de bstsal/*.[233] He translates as follows: „Von da angefangen wurden für (Urkunden von) größerer Bedeutung, wie z. B. für Generalerlasse, **die großen Goldsiegel** und für einige (Urkunden dieser Art) jenes als Altan Khan berühmte (Siegel) gewährt." ("From then on, the large gold seals were granted for some (documents) of greater importance, such as general decrees, and for some (documents of this kind) the seal known as Altan Khan.") The seal known as Altan Khan will not be discussed in the present context. It is described in Schuh's work as E3.[234] In a note, Schuh explains the phrase "from then on" as "i.e. after the handover of E2."[235] In Schuh's view, however, the seal E1 was only granted to the Fifth Dalai Lama after he had already received the seal E2 from the emperor.[236] Therefore, the use of the plural, "the large gold seals", seems contradictory at this point. However, it should be noted that the use of the

[232] Because it is irrelevant to the present question, I will not go into minor orthographic differences between the different versions here.

[233] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 3v; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 7; Schuh 1981, 5.

[234] Schuh 1981, 5–7.

[235] Schuh 1981, 47n28.

[236] Schuh 1981, 2, 46n19.

plural in the translation is an interpretation. The Tibetan text itself lacks a plural suffix. Therefore, the following translation would also have been possible: "From then on, the great gold seal was granted for documents of greater importance, such as general decrees, …" In this case, the statement would only refer to seal E2. If we look at the sentence that immediately precedes Schuh's quote in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, it also only refers to seal E2:

> *de'i phyi lo chu sbrul zla 3 tshes 10 nyin pe cing nas bod du chibs kha bsgyur bas ta'i kha zhes pa'i sa gnas su mi sna'i mdun gong ma chen pos gser yig dang tham ga skad rigs bzhi'i yi ge shan sbyar ba'i 'bru don du nub phyogs kyi phul byung zhi ba sangs rgyas rgya chen khyon la sangs rgyas bstan pa'i mnga' bdag thams cad mkhyen pa rdo rje 'chang t'a la'i bla ma tham ga zhes 'khod pa 'ja' sa dang bcas phebs/*[237]
> The following year, the Water Snake (year 1653), on the 10th day of the 3rd (Tibetan) month, while he was on his way from Beijing to Tibet, he received at a place called Ta'i kha, in the presence of various people (sent by the emperor), an imperial letter, a quadrilingual seal issued by the Great Exalted One (i. e. the emperor) with the inscription *nub phyogs kyi phul byung zhi ba sangs rgyas rgya chen khyon la sangs rgyas bstan pa'i mnga' bdag thams cad mkhyen pa rdo rje 'chang t'a la'i bla ma tham ga*, and an imperial edict.

Four key points can be made about this sentence:

1. it refers to an episode during the Fifth Dalai Lama's journey home from Beijing, which is described in the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography.[238]
2. while the year is correct, the exact date, the 10th day of the 3rd month (April 6, 1653), contradicts the information in the autobiography, according to which the event took place in the fifth month.
3. while the seal inscription quoted by the author of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* is identical with the inscription engraved in seal E2, it differs from the wording given in the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[239]
4. while the autobiography speaks of a trilingual seal inscription in accordance with the inscription of E2, the author of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* erroneously calls the inscription quadrilingual.[240]

We do not find anywhere in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* an indication that its author assumed a second gold seal granted to the Fifth Dalai Lama by the emperor. On the contrary, a statement apparently overlooked by Schuh a few pages further on in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* clearly indicates that its author believed the seal E1 was only granted by the emperor after the Fifth Dalai Lama's death to his successors:

> *khang shi'i khri bzhugs nyer gnyis pa Zrgyal dbang lnga pa chen po nyid dgung grangs drug cu re drug tu son pa chu khyi zla 2 tshes 25 la gzugs sku chos dbyings su mnal tshul bstan/ Zrgyal dbang de nyid kyi thugs dam byings gong smos ltar gyi thog Zgong ma chen pos rjes su bstsal ba'i gser tham nub phyogs mchog tu dge ba'i*

[237] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 3v; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 7.

[238] Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1989, vol. I, 415.

[239] On this issue see Schwieger 2022, 603–605.

[240] Ma grong Mi 'gyur rdo rje also points out this error in the introduction of the volume he edited together with Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs (Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, introduction 19–20).

zhing gi rgyal dbang sa steng gi rgyal bstan yongs kyi bdag po thams cad mkhyen pa vajra dha ra t'a la'i bla ma'i tham ga zhes pa rnams bstsal/[241]

In the twenty-second (correct: twenty-first)[242] throne year of Kangxi, the Water Dog year, on the 25th day of the 2nd month (April 2, 1682), when the Great Fifth King of the Victorious Ones had reached the sixty-sixth year of life, he showed the way in which his body lay down to rest in the Dharma-Sphere (i.e., he died). In addition to all the seals of that very Dalai Lama, as they are mentioned above, there were granted the golden seals with the inscription *nub phyogs mchog tu dge ba'i zhing gi rgyal dbang sa steng gi rgyal bstan yongs kyi bdag po thams cad mkhyen pa vajra dha ra t'a la'i bla ma'i tham ga*, which were granted thereafter (i.e., after the Fifth Dalai Lama's death) by the emperor (to the Dalai Lamas from the Seventh Dalai Lama onwards)."

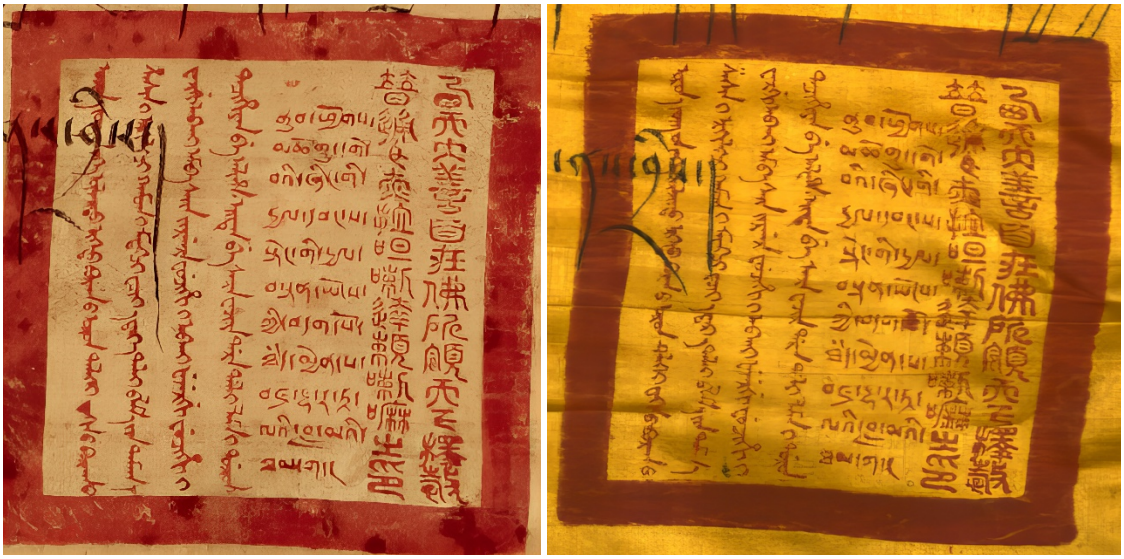
In my opinion, the above explanations lead to the conclusion that the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and its catalog are not suitable as evidence for the attribution of the seal E1 to the Fifth Dalai Lama.

3.2 Checking the External Features of the Document Issued in the Iron Dog Year

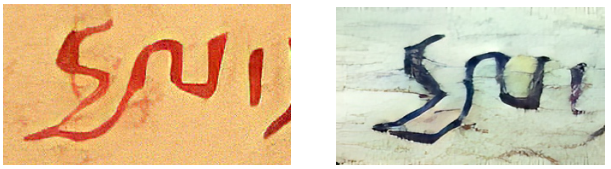
Schuh had emphasized in his email that the Seventh Dalai Lama who was in exile in East Tibet from 1729 to 1735 "with the Dalai Lamas' seal box and issued a travel letter there, ..., could not have issued a document with a seal box in the Potala in Lhasa in 1730." If only one seal with the inscription E1 actually existed at that time, Schuh's conclusion is incontestable and the dating of the document in question to 1730 cannot be correct. However, if there were two different seals with the same inscription at the same time, it should be possible to determine this on the basis of minor but clear differences. This possibility prompted me to compare the seal impressions of E1 on the travel permit from 1729 and on the document dated by me 1730 more closely. Although both documents were written on Chinese silk, differences in the material cannot be ruled out. Therefore, differences between the seal impressions that are merely caused by different material properties, the draping of the textiles, or different amounts of ink used may not be considered. Calligraphic differences, on the other hand, provide clear indications. Let us therefore take a closer look at both seal impressions. On the left is the print from 1729, on the right the one dated by me 1730.

[241] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 4v.

[242] Chab spel and Ma grong (1991, 10) added the correct year of the emperor's reign in brackets: *khang shi'i khri bzhugs nyer gnyis <gcig pa>*.



At first glance, there do not appear to be any significant differences: Layout, line or column breaks are congruent on both prints. On closer inspection, however, minor differences are recognizable. If we concentrate on the Tibetan text, we particularly notice differences in the writing of the *ya btags*, the sub-joined letters *ya*, the vowel *u* and the *la btags* or sub-joined letter *la*.



The differences noted here can also be found between the impressions of the gold seal E1 (on the left) and its iron replica (on the right) published by Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei.[243]

[243] Impressions from Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991, 57 and 59.

The findings lead to the conclusion that it is by no means impossible that a document was issued in the name of the Seventh Dalai Lama in the Potala, although he himself was in exile in East Tibet at the time indicated.

3.3 Checking the Internal Features of the Document Issued in the Iron Dog Year

Schuh has stated that unspecified internal diplomatic features of the document in question would speak against dating it to 1730. Among the internal features or formal properties that provide largely reliable indications of the authorship of documents are unchanging formulas or parts of formulas that have proven to be characteristic of the documents of certain chanceries or issuers in the available archival material, while they have not yet been proven for others. Most prominent among these features is the opening section, the *intitulatio*. The *intitulatio* of the document in question reads:

> *Zgong ma chen po'i bka'i lung gis /* ***nub phyogs mchog tu dge ba'i zhing gi rgyal dbang / sa steng gi rgyal bstan yongs kyi bdag po thams cad mkhyen pa badzra rda ra t'a la'i bla mar*** *'bod pa'i gtam /*[244]

Such an *intitulatio*, which contains the full title of the Dalai Lama as it was engraved on the seal E1 (printed in bold above), is first documented in charters from the Seventh Dalai Lama onwards. It has not yet been found in any document of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Leaving aside the document discussed here, I know of four other documents from the Seventh Dalai Lama that contain the same title word for word.[245] There are also known documents of the Eighth and Twelfth Dalai Lama that contain the same title in their *intitulatio*.[246]

By contrast, typical for documents of the Fifth and the Sixth Dalai Lama is an *intitulatio* that contains the following passage:

> *nub kyi lha gnas ches dge ba bde bar gnas pa'i sangs rgyas Zbka' lung gnam 'og bstan pa gcig gyur 'gyur med rdo rje 'chang rgya mtsho'i bla mar dbang bskur ba'i gtam /*

or the variant:

> *nub kyi lha gnas ches dge ba bde bar gnas pa'i sangs rgyas bka' lung gnam 'og gi skye 'gro thams cad bstan pa gcig tu gyur pa 'gyur med rdo rje 'chang rgya mtsho'i bla mar dbang bskur ba'i gtam /*[247]

Even the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho used this wording in the *intitulatio* when he issued documents in the Fifth Dalai Lama's name during the period when he kept the Dalai Lama's death a secret.[248] And he also used the E2 seal for these documents.

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[244] Schwieger 1922, 618 (translation 615).

[245] Laurent 2022, 478 (in the transliteration the syllabe *mchog* is missing); Rdo sbis 2016, 174, 192, 195.

[246] Rdo sbis 2016, 226, 235, 251–252, 258.

[247] See Schuh 1981, 309; Daowei·Cairangjia 2016, 27, 34; Rdo sbis 2016, 158, 163, dtab ID 1416 (012 2-1/#/39/2/4), ID 1080 (012 2-1/#/4/5/4); Schwieger 2022, 604 (excerpt of a document of the Sixth Dalai Lama).

[248] Qinghai Sheng bowuguan and Qinghai Minzu bowuguan 2012, no. 125, 127, 129.

3.4 A Preliminary Conclusion

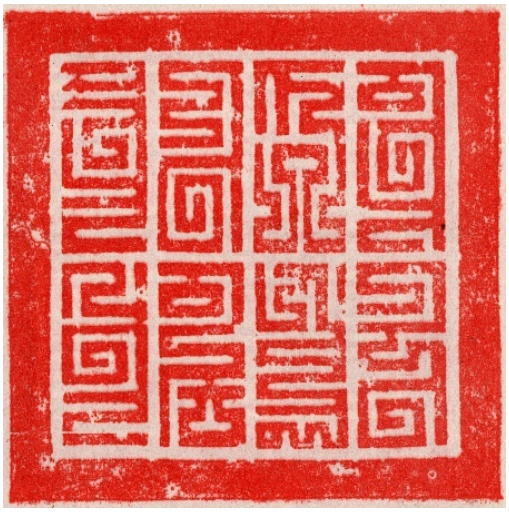
After the analysis presented above and in my contribution to the Festschrift for Dieter Schuh, I am fairly certain that the document and its seal impression do not originate from the Fifth Dalai Lama. The analysis has also shown that the place of issue and the assumed date of issue of 1730 do not necessarily contradict the exile of the Seventh Dalai Lama in East Tibet, since a replica of the seal E1 was apparently used to seal the document. In this case, the document was not issued by the Seventh Dalai Lama himself, but merely issued in his name. As the mastermind behind the action, one would then have to assume Pho lha nas as the overriding political authority in central Tibet. It is quite conceivable that he considered a certificate of appointment issued by the Seventh Dalai Lama to be necessary for formal legal reasons, even if the exact circumstances must have been clear to everyone involved.

However, at present this can only be a preliminary conclusion. A final conclusion would require additional sources about 'Phan po Khang ser byang pa, the beneficiary named in the document discussed here, and his appointment as governor of West Tibet. It would also be helpful to know when and for which purpose the replica of seal E1 was made. Since I currently lack such additional information, other possibilities, such as a forgery or even a later dating, cannot be completely ruled out.

4. Official Seals with ’Phags pa Script

4.1 Seals with ’Phags pa Script of the Sa skya-Yuan Period[249]

SEAL 60a


11.0 x 11.0 (9.3 x 9.4) cm

The seal was made of jade. For illustrations of the seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 19. For the transliteration and translation of the seal inscription, see under SEAL 17.

SEAL 60b

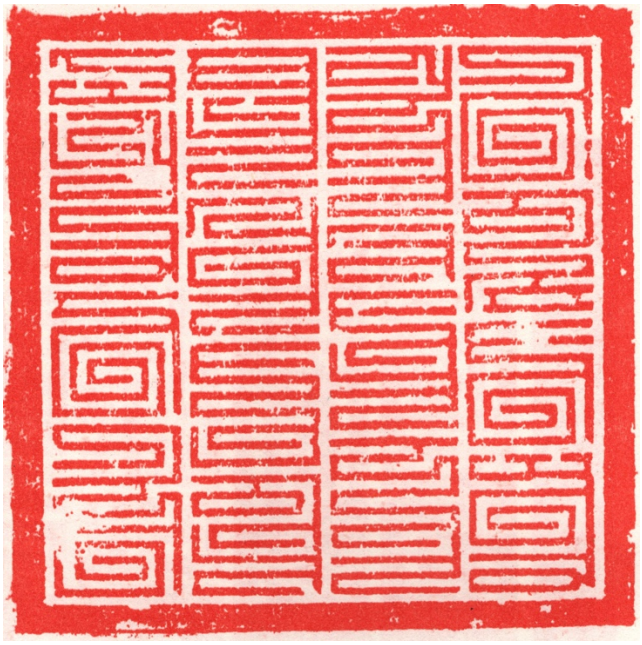
There exists a second, slightly larger version of seal SEAL 60a.

[249] The data for the outer edge lengths of the seal impressions listed in this subsection were taken from Sgrolkar et al. 1995 and Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei 1991. I have added the dimensions of the inner edges in parentheses.

An impression of this seal has been published by Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 9. They indicate 12.3 x 12.3 cm for the outer edges of the stamp. Chen Dan and Nanjia Cairang 2010, 16-17, contains illustrations of both the seal made of jade and the seal impression. The dimensions of the outer edges are given here as 12.2 x 12.2 cm. For the inner edges, 9.7 x 9.7 cm can be deduced.

For the transliteration and translation of the seal inscription, see under SEAL 17.

SEAL 61



9.6 x 9.6 (8.8 x 8.8) cm

1. *tay’wen ti shhi*
2. *thung ling ju gui*
3. *s-heng ni jung hying*
4. *shi gyaw ji yin*

The seal was made of jade. For illustrations of the seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 16.

The inscription represents the Chinese phrase *dayuan dishi tongling zhu guo sengni zhongxing shijiao zhi yin* (大元帝师统领诸国僧尼中兴释教之印), meaning “Seal of the Imperial Preceptor of the Yuan Dynasty, who leads the monks and nuns of all countries to revive the Buddhist teachings.”

Impressions of the seal can be found on documents issued by the national preceptors Rin chen rgyal mtshan, Sangs rgyas dpal, Kun dga’ blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po and Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po.[250]

[250] Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 8-12. Note that the dating of document no. 8 has been corrected from 1304 to 1280 (Schwieger 2015, 8) and the dating of document no. 9 from 1308 to 1309 (Schwieger 2015, 232n20). The other documents are dated 1319, 1321 and 1337.

SEAL 62a

1. *gui sh-hi* /
2. *ji yin*

10.9 x 10.9 (8.9 x 8.9) cm

The seal was made of jade. For illustrations of the seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 18. The inscription represents the Chinese phrase *Guoshi zhi yin* (国师之印), "Seal of the National Preceptor."

SEAL 62b

Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 6, present a second version of seal SEAL 62a. It was also made of jade. Compared to SEAL 62a, some of the letters show more "folds", as we know them from the nine-folded Chinese seal script (*jiu die zhuan*).

10.7 x 10.7 (9.2 x 9.3) cm

SEAL 63

1. *ga on ding*
2. *gui sh-hi*
3. *ji yin*

10.4 x 10.4 (8.3 x 8.3) cm

The seal was made of jade. For illustrations of the seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 20. The inscription represents the Chinese phrase *Guanding guoshi zhi yin* (灌顶国师之印), “Seal of the Empowering National Preceptor.”

SEAL 64

1. *is m’ar gam*
2. *gyun min wan*
3. *xu fu yin*

8.5 x 8.5 (6.6 x 6.6) cm

The seal was made of copper. For illustrations of the seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 21. The first column of the inscription is a transcription of the east Tibetan toponym sMar khams. The

second and third column represent the Chinese phrase *junmin wanhu fu yin* (亦思麻儿甘军民万户府印). Together, the inscription can be translated as "Seal of the Office of the Military and Civil Administration of the Myriarch sMar khams."

SEAL 65

1. *pay len*
2. *'wang yin*

11.3 x 11.3 (9.0 x 8.8) cm

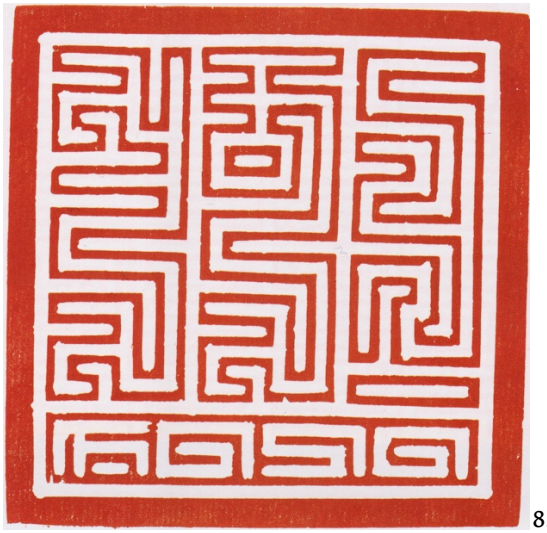
For illustrations of the gilded copper seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 22. The inscription represents the Chinese phrase *Bailan wang yin* (白兰王印), "Seal of Prince Bailan."

Title and seal of Bailan were first granted to Phyag na rdo rje, the brother of 'Phags pa, by Khubilai Khan. Later, they were also successively bestowed on bSod nams bzang po, Kun dga' legs pa'i 'byung gnas rgyal mtshan and Grags pa rgyal mtshan.[251]

SEAL 66

So far, I only know of one seal inscription from the Yuan period that shows, at least in part, a transliteration of Tibetan text. While the Tibetan text is engraved in three vertical columns, the transcription of the Chinese text is engraved in a horizontal line at the bottom.

[251] See Petech 1990, 19, 77, 94–95, 128.


8.7 x 8.7 (7.9 x 7.9) cm

The seal was made of jade. For illustrations of the seal and its stamp see Sgrolkar et al. 1995, no. 17. The vertical inscription reads:

1. *sangs*
2. *rgyas*
3. *dpal*

The horizontal inscription reads:

ti shi

“Imperial Preceptor Sangs rgyas dpal.”

4.2 Seals with ’Phags pa Script during the Time of the Phag mo gru pa

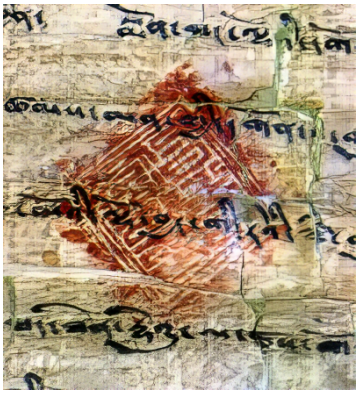
The ’Phag mo gru pa administrators continued to use Situ seals with an inscription in ’Phags pa script. Three documents digitized from the Lhasa Archives show impressions of different varieties of an imperial seal with an inscription in ’Phags pa script, which was first granted by the Yuan emperor to Byang chub rgyal mtshan, the first ruler of the Phag mo gru dynasty.[252]

SEAL 67a

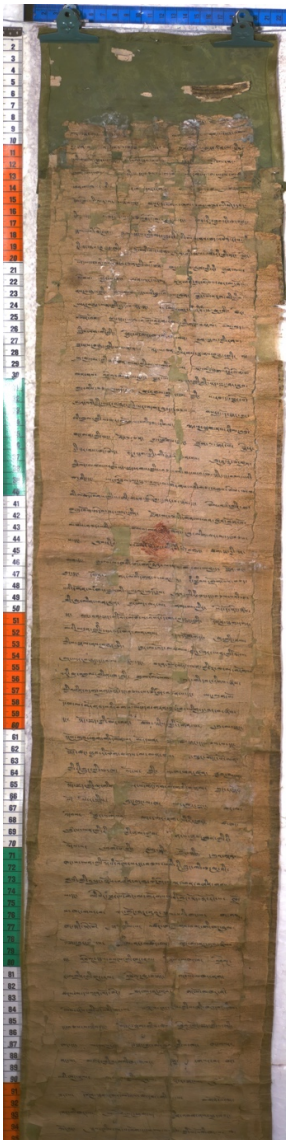
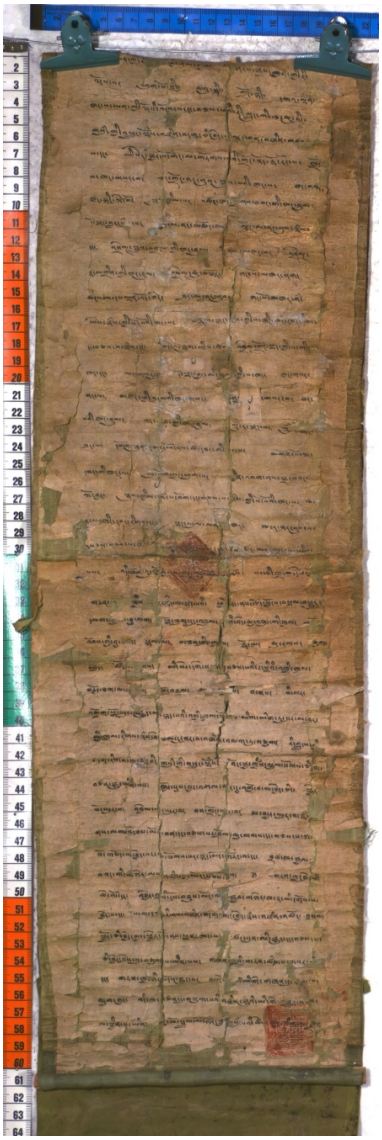
According to information from the Tibetan Archives, the first document belongs to a group of documents, which were issued by the sNe gdong *rgyal po* Ngag gi dbang phyug bkra shis grags pa rgyal

[252] According to Petech 1990, 126, the seal was given to Byang chub rgyal mtshan by an imperial envoy during the New Year’s festivities of 1358.

mtshan (reign 1499–1564),[253] the ninth Phag mo gru ruler. The document gives as year of issue the Water Snake year, which corresponds to 1533.



3.0 x 3.0 (2.2 x 2.2) cm

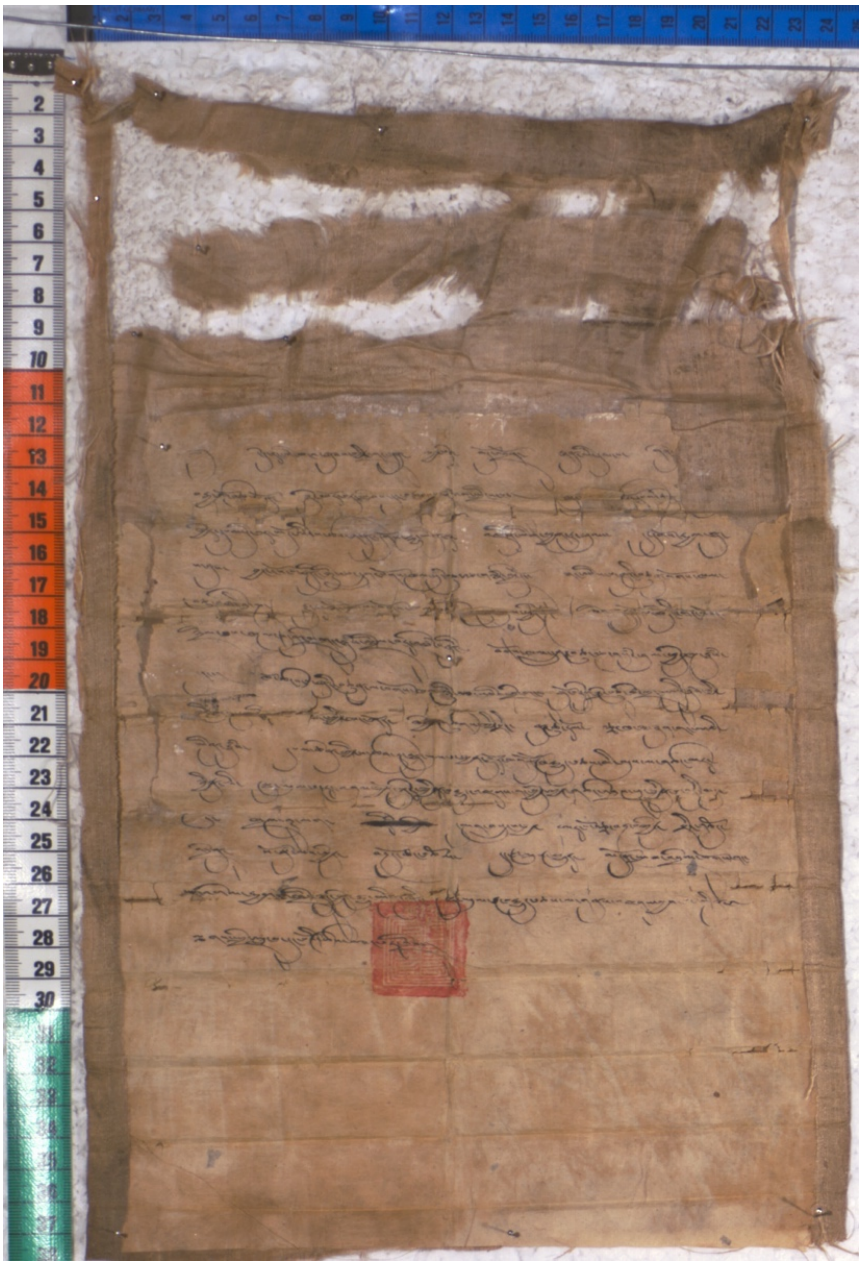
Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 309—316.

[253] KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/7/3 (ID 959).

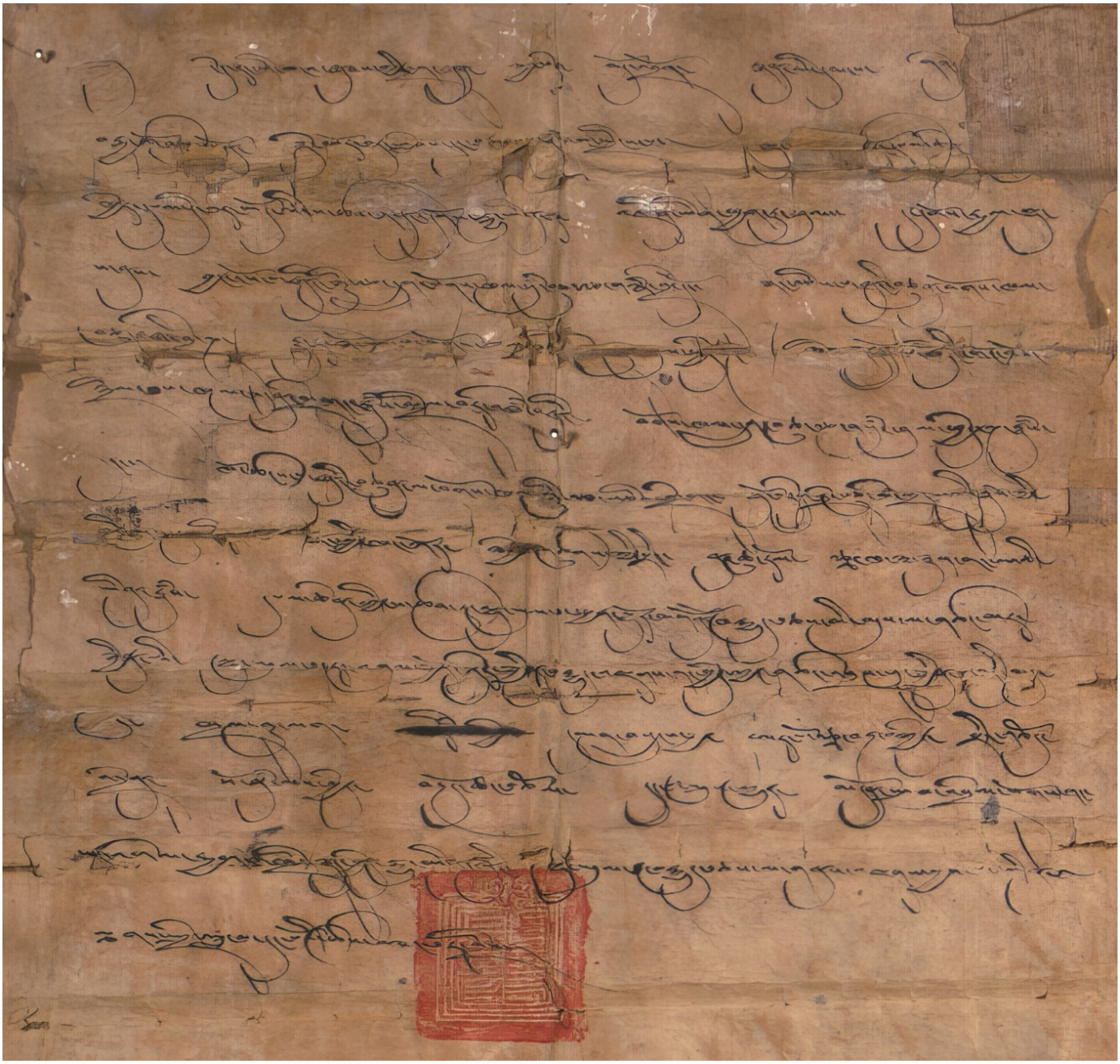
SEAL 67b

The second document was issued in the first month of an Iron Monkey year, which the Tibetan Archives dated 1560.[254] The most striking difference between this seal impression and SEAL 67a is an additional frame around the inscription.

3.0 x 3.0 (2.2 x 2.2) cm



[254] ID 1039 = k972

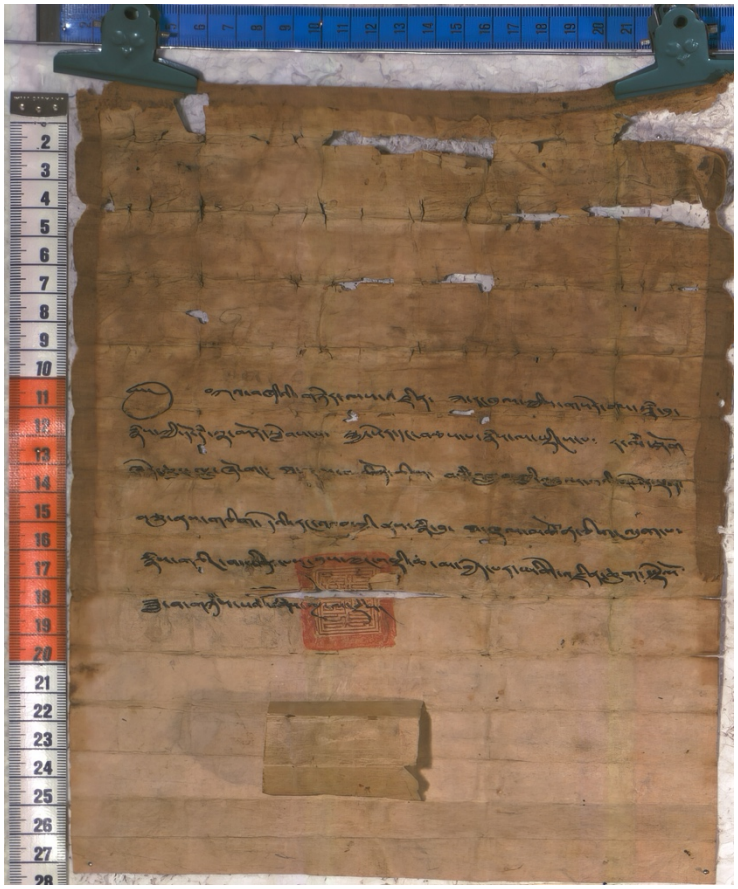


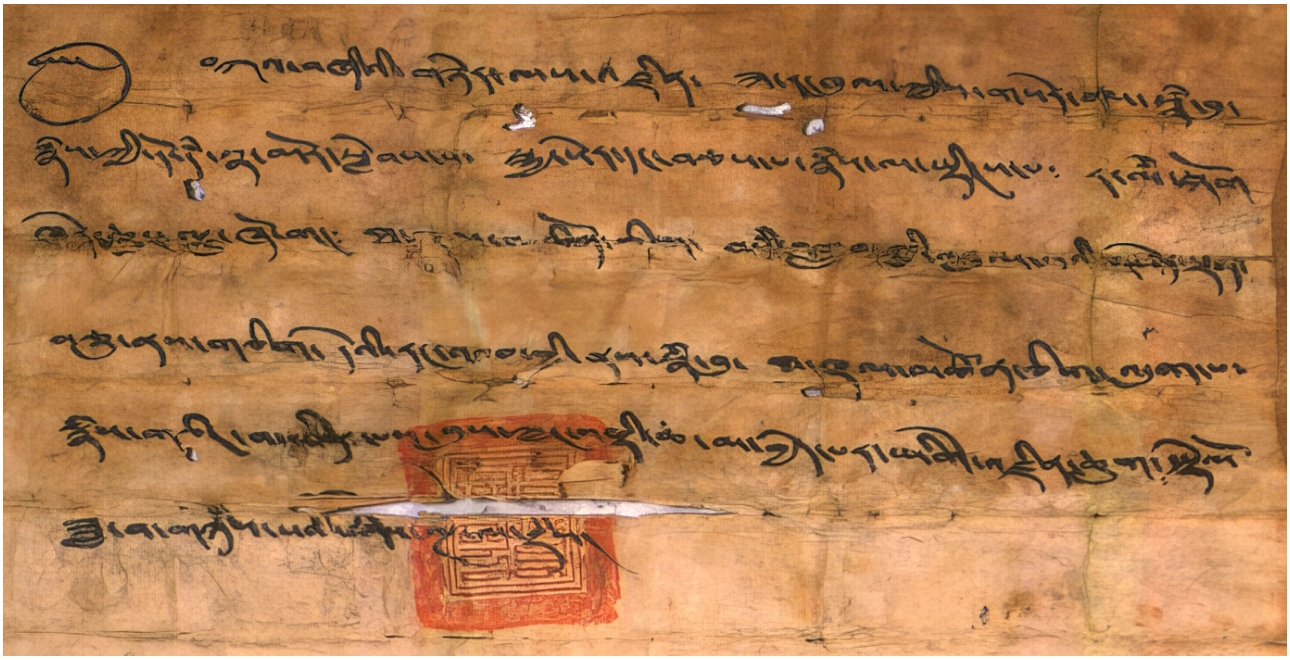
SEAL 67c

The third document showing such a seal impression was issued in a Monkey year, which according to the Tibetan Archives corresponds to the year 1632.[255] However, I cannot say how the archive arrived at this dating. The issuer of the document is not given. The seal impression differs from SEAL 67a mainly due to its size.

[255] ID 2037 = k1912

3.3 x 3.3 (2.3 x 2.4) cm





Although not easy to read, all impressions appear to have the same inscription, which can be reconstructed as follows. Accordingly, the two columns show from left to right the ’Phags pa letters:

1. *tay s-hi*
2. *tu yin*

They represent a transcription of the Chinese characters 大司徒印, *da si tu yin*, meaning "seal of the Grand Instructor." As David Farquhar has pointed out, *Da Situ* was bestowed as an honorary title on high officials during the Yuan dynasty. Farquhar introduced and analyzed an impression of a Situ-seal that its unknown owner had stamped on a famous painting of Liang Kai (梁楷, c. 1140 – c. 1210), showing the poet Li Bai (李白, 701–762).[256] Although very similar to the seal impressions shown above, the impression on the Chinese painting is much larger with a side length of 10 cm.[257]

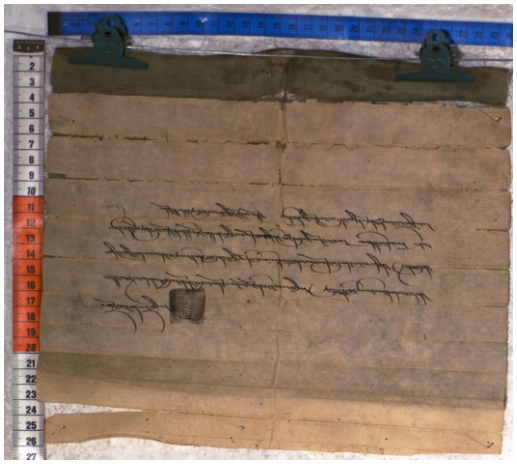
4.3 Annotated List of Official Seal Impressions with 'Phags pa Script from the dGa' ldan pho brang Period[258]

4.3.1 Two-column Seal Inscriptions

SEAL 68

2.2 x 2.3 (1.4 x 1.4) cm

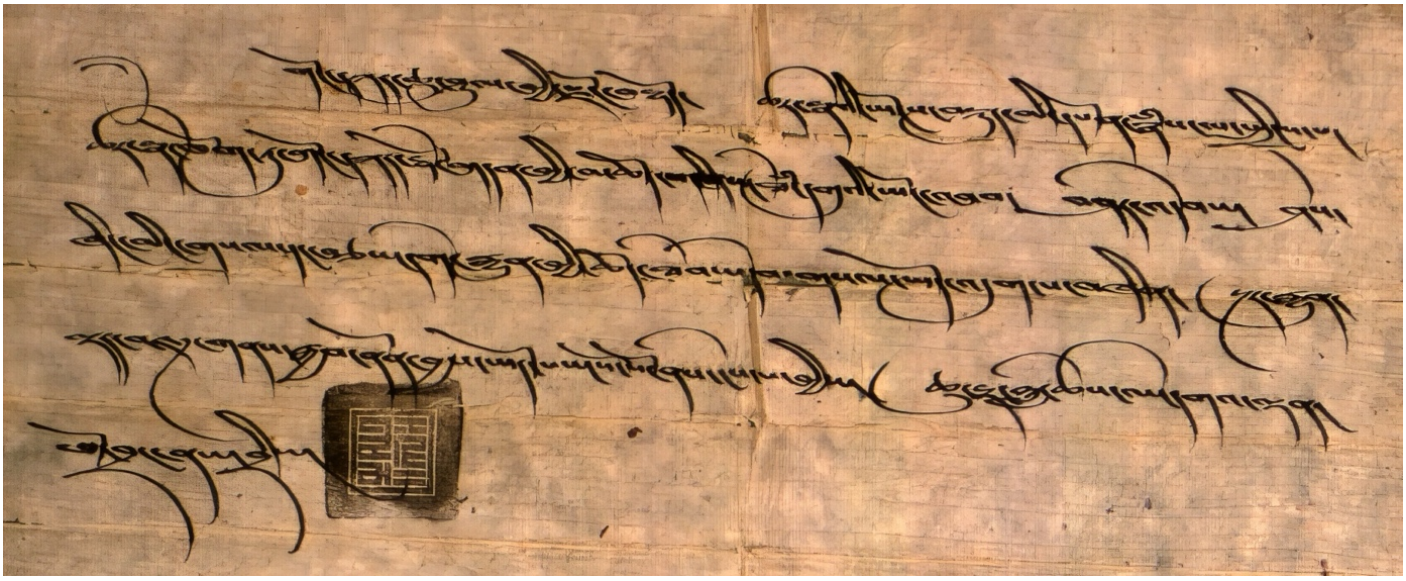
(1) *Z ra ma*
(2) *ra dza //*



[256] Farquhar 1966, 385–387.

[257] The painting is kept in the Tokyo National Museum. See: https://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/C0091522. The fact that seals originally from the Yuan period continued to be used or imitated after the end of the Yuan dynasty seems to have been common practice not only in Tibet, but also among the Torghuts or Kalmyks settling on the banks of the Volga. Bembya L. Mitruev has pointed to an impression of a Situ-seal in 'Phags pa-script, which was in 1642 stamped on a letter to the tsar. Mitruev also drew attention to the similarity with the impressions of Situ seals in the Tibetan Archives shown above. (Mitruev 2021a, 40–41)

[258] I follow Schuh's convention of rendering pseudographs in the transliteration by P and special punctuation marks, but mostly symbols indicating respect, by Z.



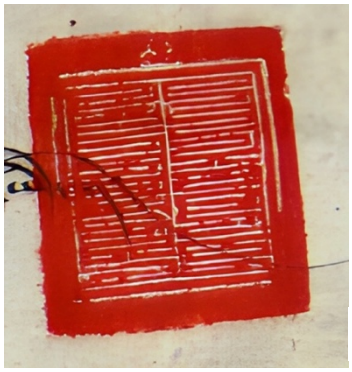
To date, this seal impression is only known from a single document, which was issued in 1642 (*chu rta*) in the dGa’ ldan pho brang, then the Dalai Lama’s residence in ’Bras spungs Monastery. The issuer of the document and owner of the seal is not mentioned.[259]

SEAL 69a and SEAL 69b

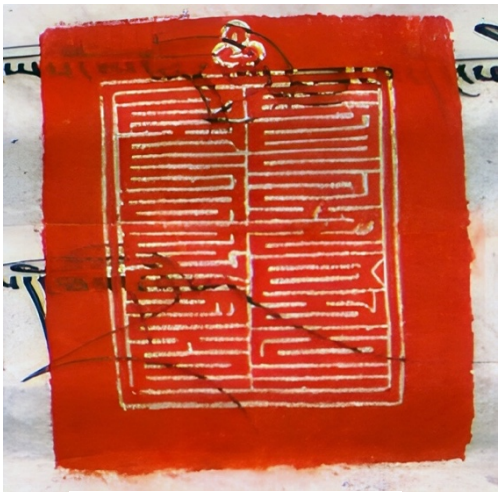
Impressions of two seals of Blo bzang bstan skyong dbang po alias mKha’ ’gro Blo bzang bstan skyong, Khoshot ruler of Khams from 1651 to 1673. The two impressions originate from a document issued in 1663.[260] Both impressions show, in ’Phags pa script, the same inscription.

(1) *bstan bskyong*
(2) *dbang po ky*[*i*] *tham kha //*

“Seal of Bstan skyong dbang po”

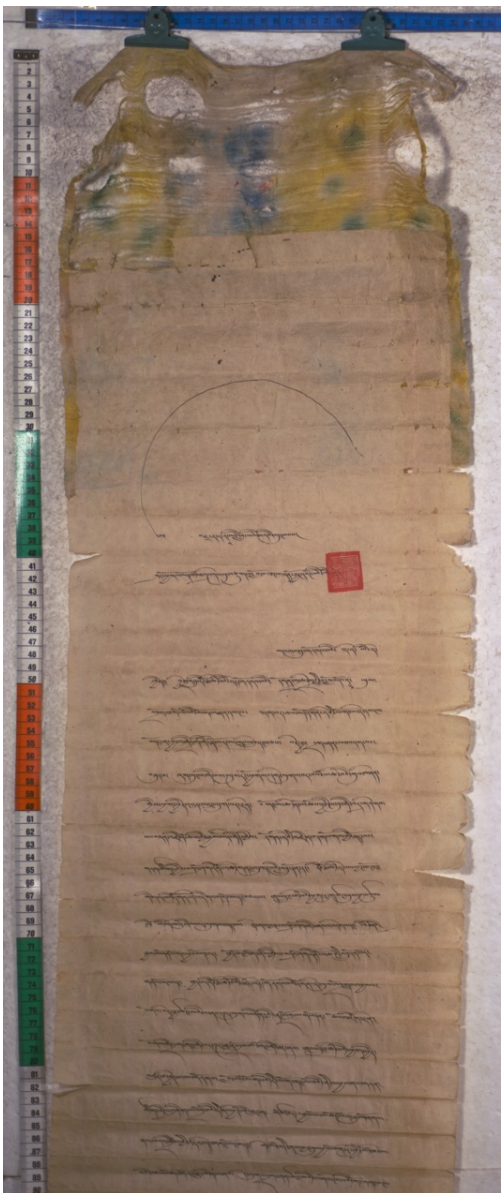


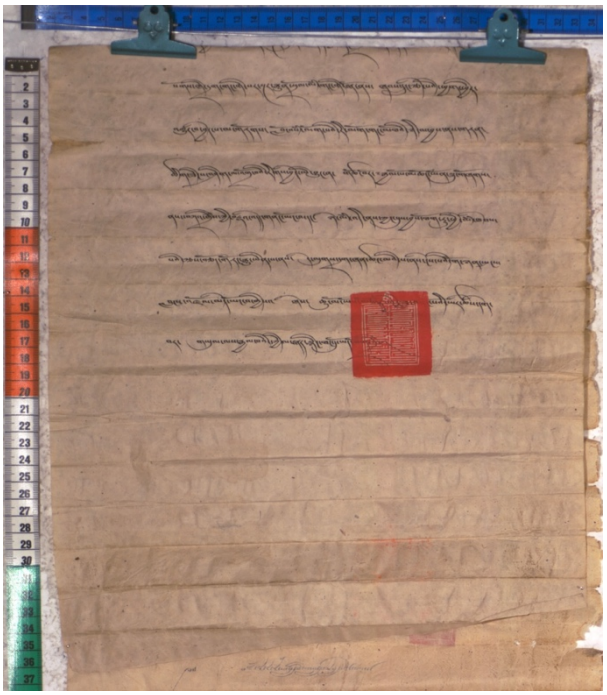
2.8 x 3.1 (2.3 x 2.4) cm



4.6 x 5.0 (3.2 x 3.7) cm

[259] The document originally belonged to the Kun bde gling documents and is now preserved in the Archives of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Lhasa. The archive signature is 012 2-1/#/56/3/4 (ID 1641). The document has not been included in the *Digitized Tibetan Archives Material at Bonn University*.
[260] KDL: 012 2-1/#/97/1/4 (ID 2131). For information on mKha’ ’gro Blo bzang bstan skyong and a transliteration and translation of the document see Schwieger, forthcoming 2025b.





For enlarged images of the document see appendix 1, pp. 317—319.

4.3.2 Three-column Seal Inscriptions

SEAL 70a

The oldest Dalai Lama seal known to date is said in the "Guide for the Blind" to have originally been granted to the Third Dalai Lama bSod nams rgya mtsho (1543–1588) by Altan Khan (1507–1582). Therefore, this seal would be known by the name *gser gyi rgyal po*, "The Golden King," which is the Tibetan translation of "Altan Khan".[261] The "Guide for the Blind" refers to the seal book of the *yig tshang* as its source.[262] The only original seal impression known to me and depicted below was stamped on a

[261] *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 2v; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 5. Please note that Chab spel and Ma grong do not specifically highlight the section of text inserted in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* and marked in red.

[262] *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, 22r; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 35. The illustration in Cab spel and Ma grong 1991 is not a tracing of the seal impression but merely explains the seal inscription in *dbu can* script.

document of the Fifth Dalai Lama from 1648, which was published by Dieter Schuh in 1981.[263] Unfortunately, there are no size specifications for either the document or the square seal impression.

Impression of the earlier version of the Dalai Lama seal called *gSer gyi rgyal po* from 1648

Drawings of the seal impression are provided in two modern catalogs.[264] Both do not give a source for their illustration. A comparison with the original seal impression known to me shows that in both publications two syllables have been joined together in the middle of the middle column by a faulty connecting line. In addition, the letter *ma*, which appears twice in the text, is incorrect in each case. It is possible that the errors are already contained in the template, which may have come from one of the government’s seal books.

The inscription of the seal reads:

(1) *rdo rje ’chang*
(2) *ta la’i bla ma’*
(3) *yi tham ka rrgyal*

Two superfluous letters are conspicuous: the *’(a)* at the end of the word *bla ma* in the second column[265] and the double superscript *r* at the beginning of the word *rgyal* in the last column.

The translation reads: “Seal of the *rdo rje ’chang* Ta la’i bla ma. Victory!”

Only the Fifth Dalai Lama still seems to have used this seal, as his successor, the Sixth Dalai Lama, already used the slightly modified copy, which is shown below.

SEAL 70b

Beginning with the Sixth Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lamas used a copy of the seal called *gSer gyi rgyal po*. It has a slightly modified inscription compared to the original seal. A punctuation mark has been added

[263] Schuh 1981, 6, 317, 320–321.

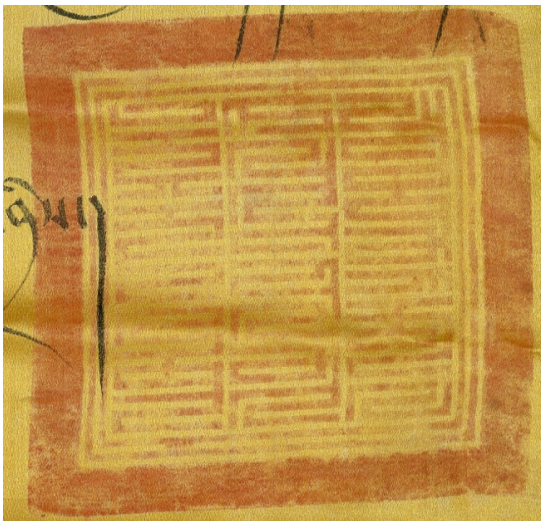
[264] Kollmar-Paulenz 2005, 54; Phun tshogs tshe brtan *et al.* 2000, 33.

[265] For a possible explanation of the redundant letter *’(a)* see Schuh 1981, 47n36.

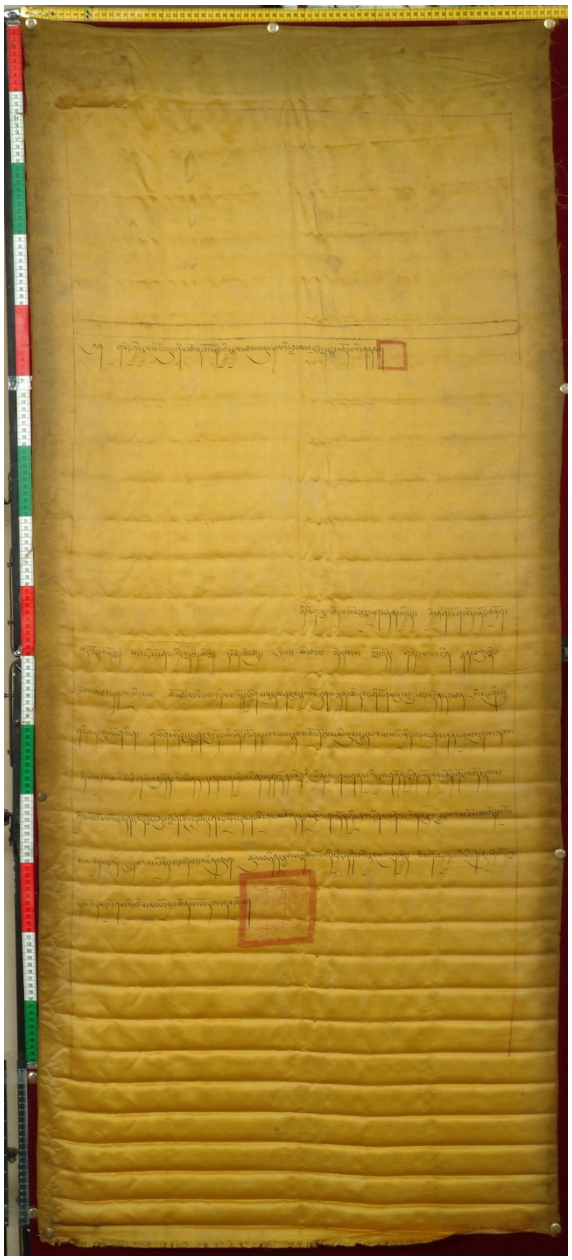
at the beginning of the text. While the superfluous letter *r* in the last word is deleted here, the superfluous letter *'(a)* at the end of the word *bla ma* remains. The transliterated text is as follows:

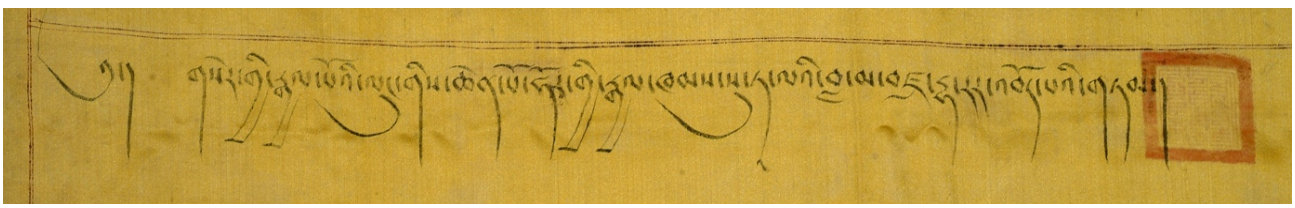
(1) *Z rdo rje 'chang*
(2) *ta la'i bla ma'*
(3) *yi tham ka rgyal*

Impression of the later version of the *gSer gyi rgyal po* from a document of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho from 1692 (*chu spre*)[266]

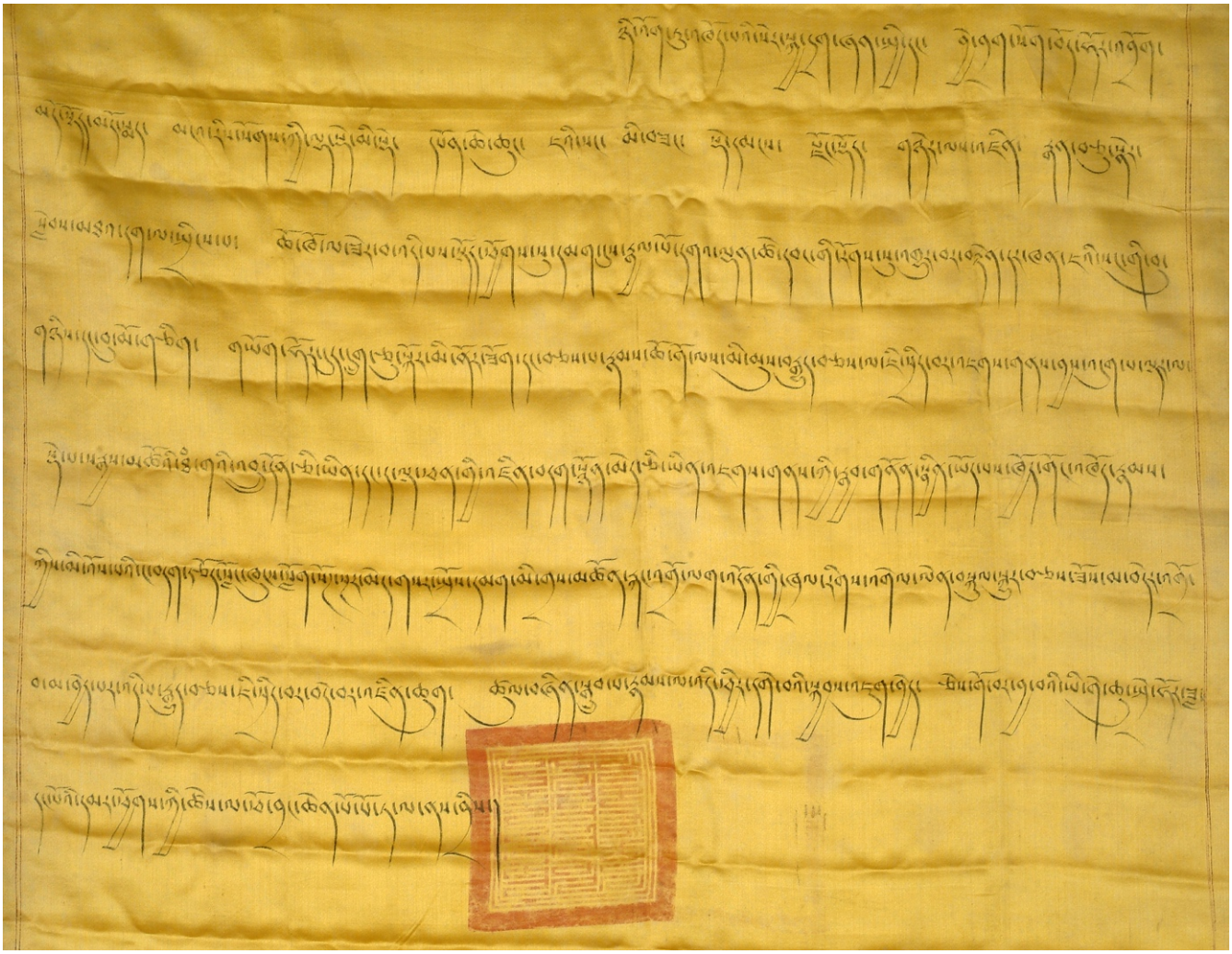


11.1 x 10.5 (9.0 x 8.9) cm





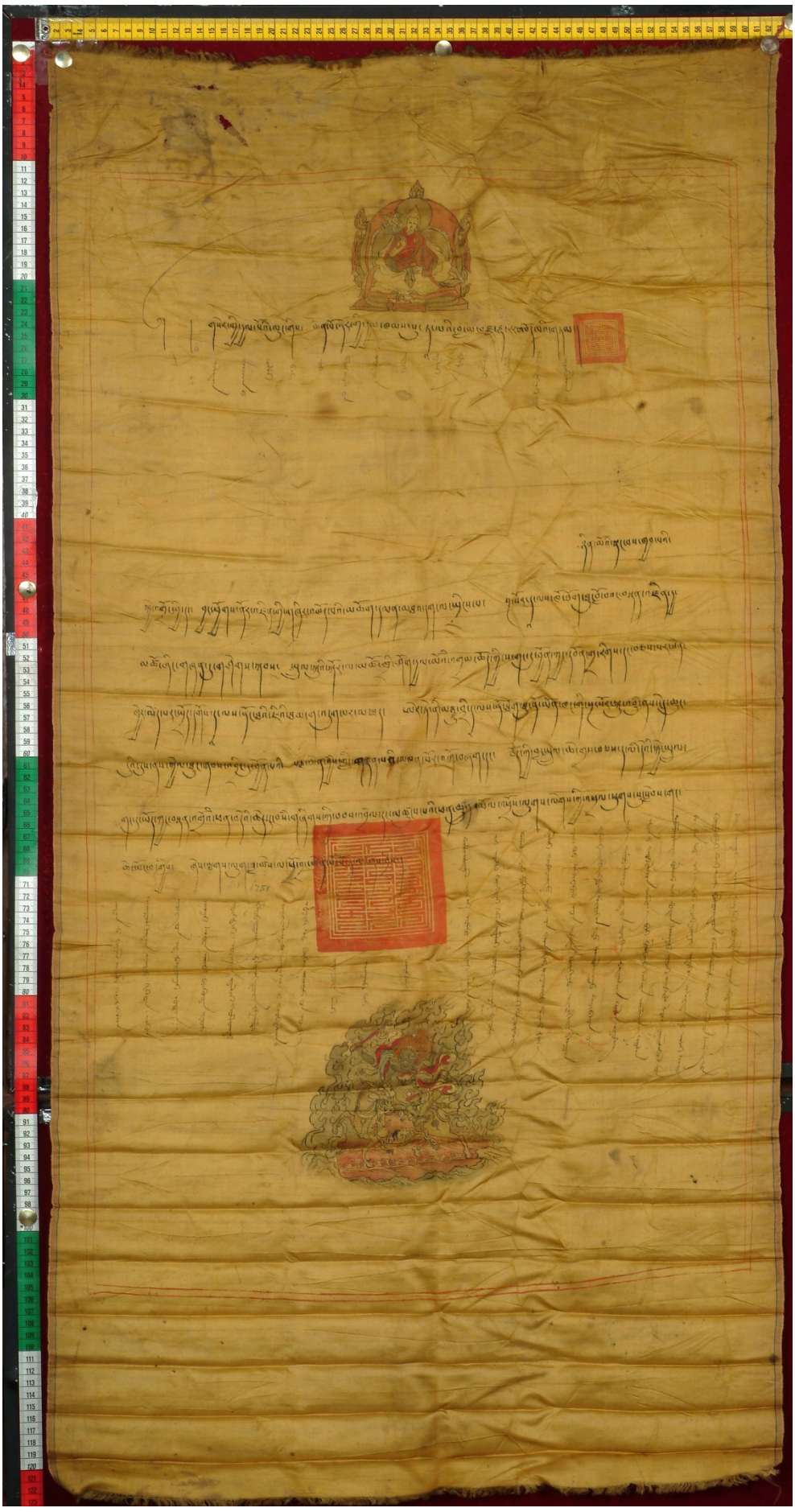
[266] LTWA: 0835_LTWA_27.

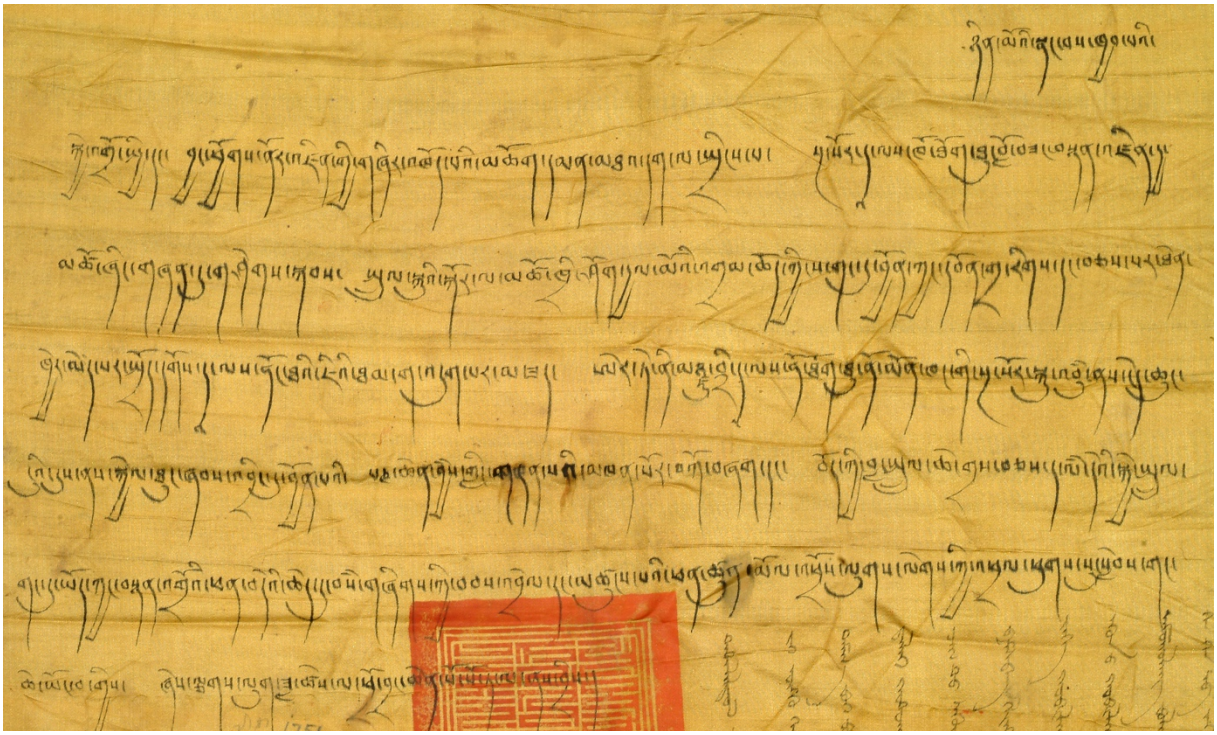


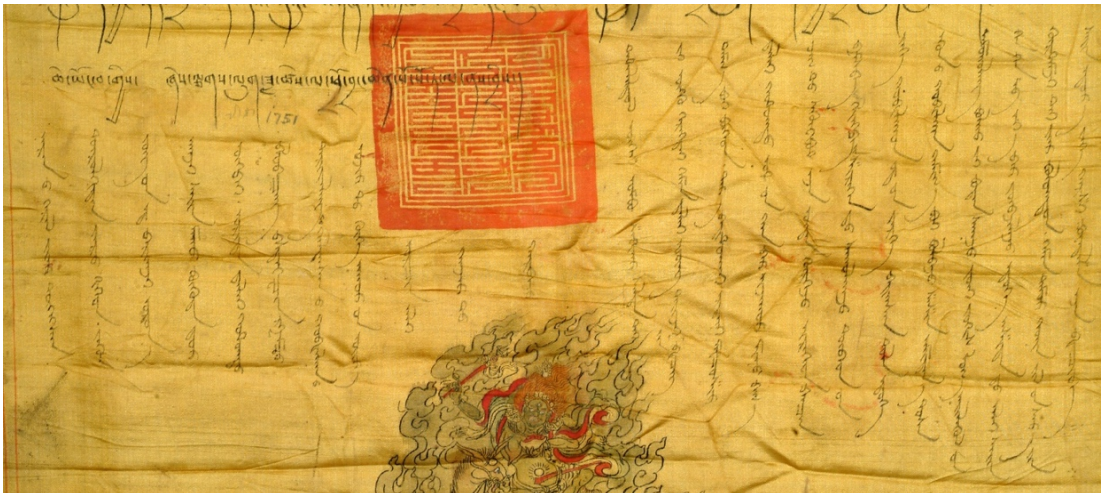
Impression of the later version of the *gSer gyi rgyal po* from a document of the Seventh Dalai Lama sKal bzang rgya mtsho from 1751 (*lcags lug*)[267]

11.0 x 10.7 (8.8 x 8.6) cm.

[267] LTWA: 1579_LTWA_820. For another impression on a document of the Seventh Dalai Lama from 1748 see Schuh 1981, 331, 335.

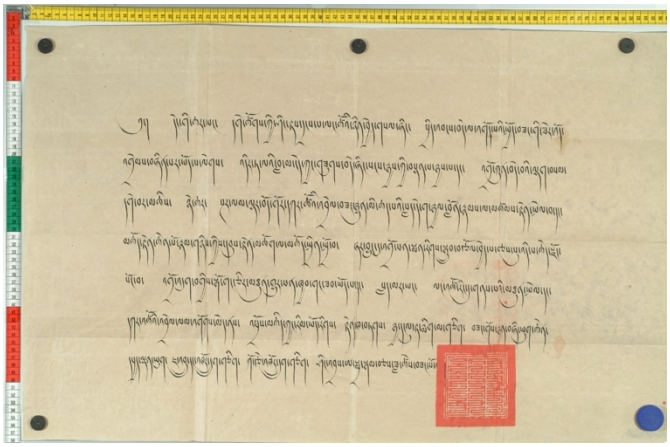


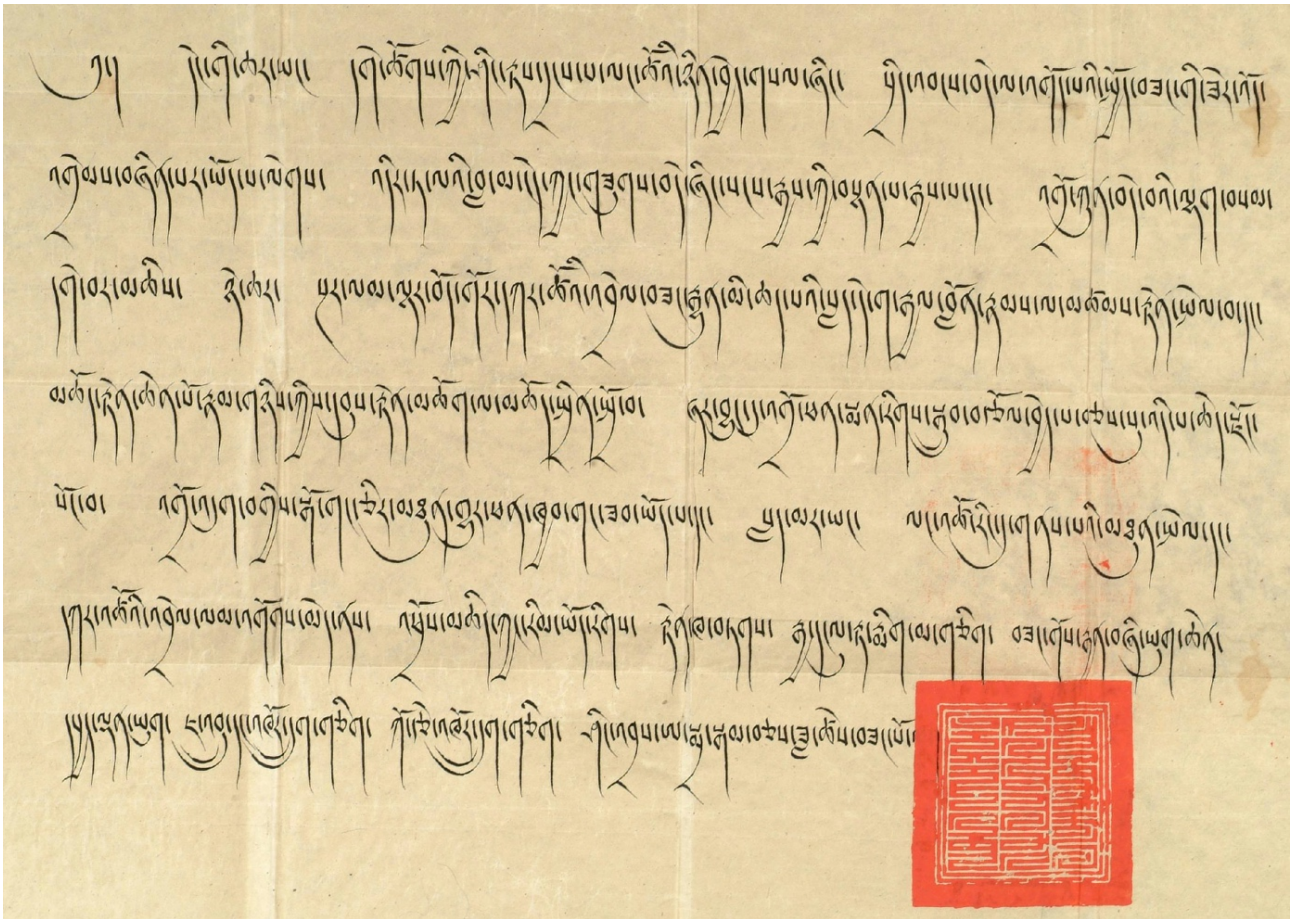




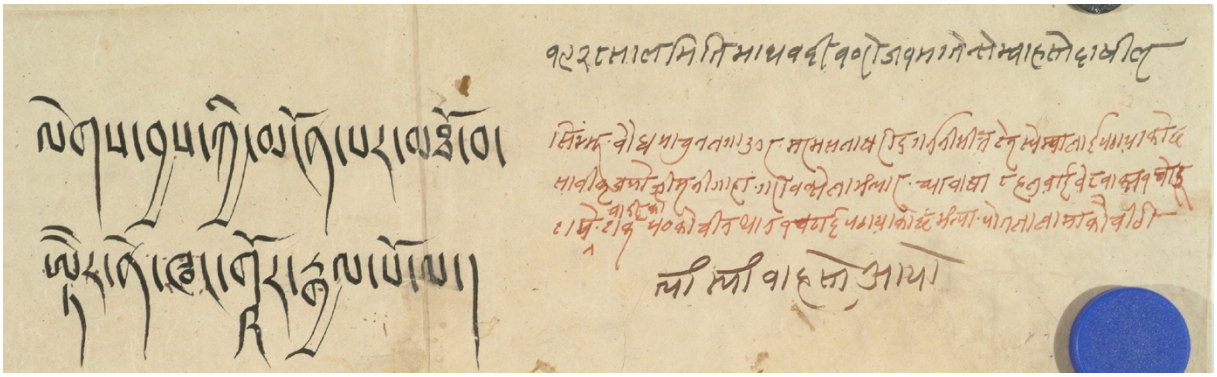
Impression of the later version of the *gSer gyi rgyal po* seal on an undated document of the Twelfth Dalai Lama 'Phrin las rgya mtsho (1857–1875)[268]

10.6 x 10.9 (8.4 x 8.7) cm





[268] KHD: 0424_KHD_S71.

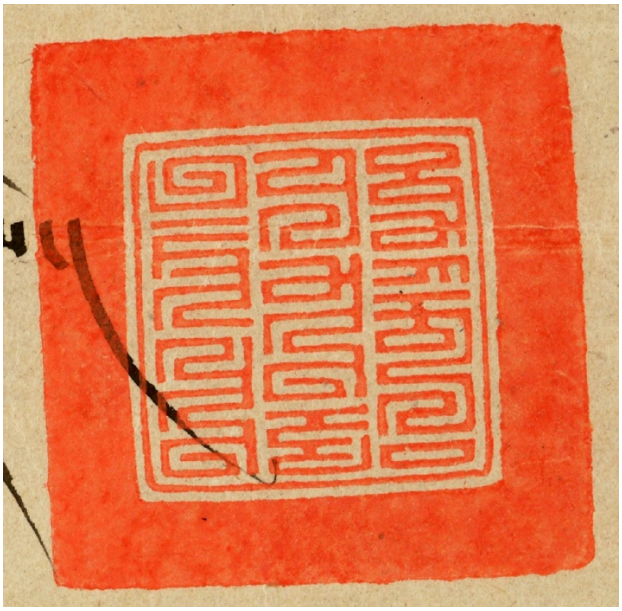


Back of the document

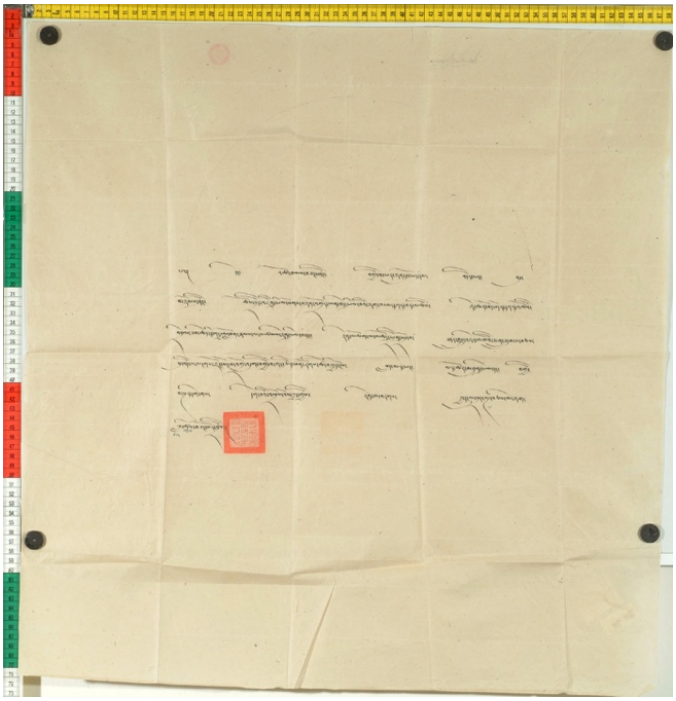
According to Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, the later version of the *gSer gyi rgyal po* seal, as it was kept in the Nor bu gling kha, is a copper seal with a wooden knob. It has a square stamp, whose side length measures 11 cm. The entire seal has a height of 11.5 cm.[269]

SEAL 71

Impression of a Dalai Lama seal from 1927[270]

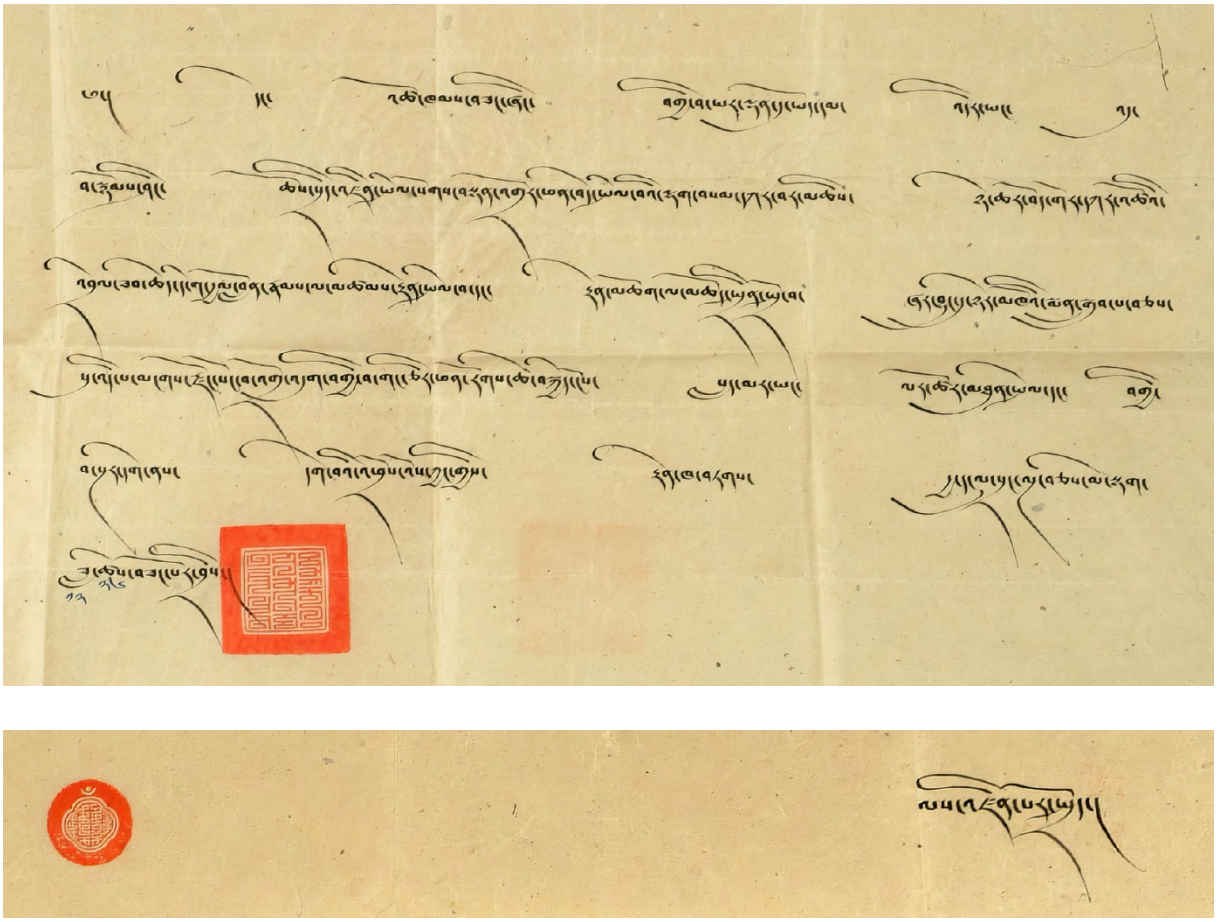


4.35 x 4.35 (3.0 x 3.0) cm



[269] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 47.

[270] KHD: 0446_KHD_S127.



Back of the document

The inscription reads:

(1) *Z tā la'i*
(2) *bla ma'i P*
(3) *tham ka rgyal P*

"Seal of the Dalai Lama. Victory!"

Numerous impressions of this seal are known from the Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thub bstan rgya mtsho and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho. From the fact that this seal is not mentioned in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, Schuh concluded that it was produced after the reign of the third De mo regent, presumably in connection with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's assumption of office.[271]

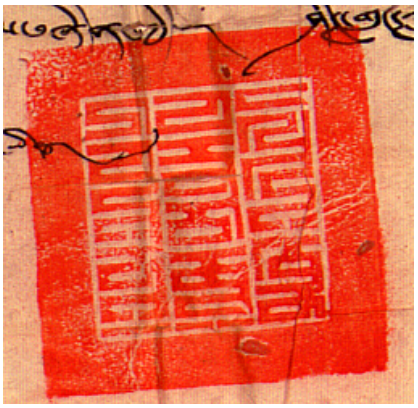
Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei have depicted the impression of a smaller version of this seal.[272] Its outer edges have a length of 3.3 cm. It shows three white dots in the upper frame. In addition, it is distinguished by the fact that the impression shows a white inscription on a red background instead of a red inscription on a white background. The seal itself is made of iron with a wooden button and has a height of 9.3 cm. It is explained as the private seal of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

[271] Schuh 1981, 13.

[272] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 66.

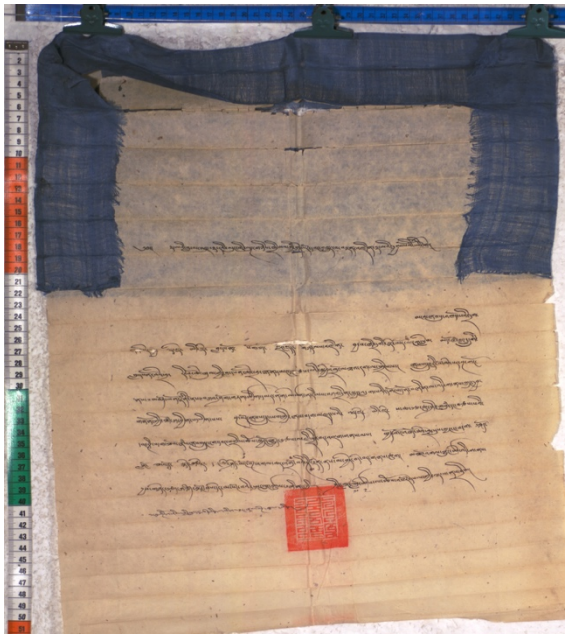
SEAL 72

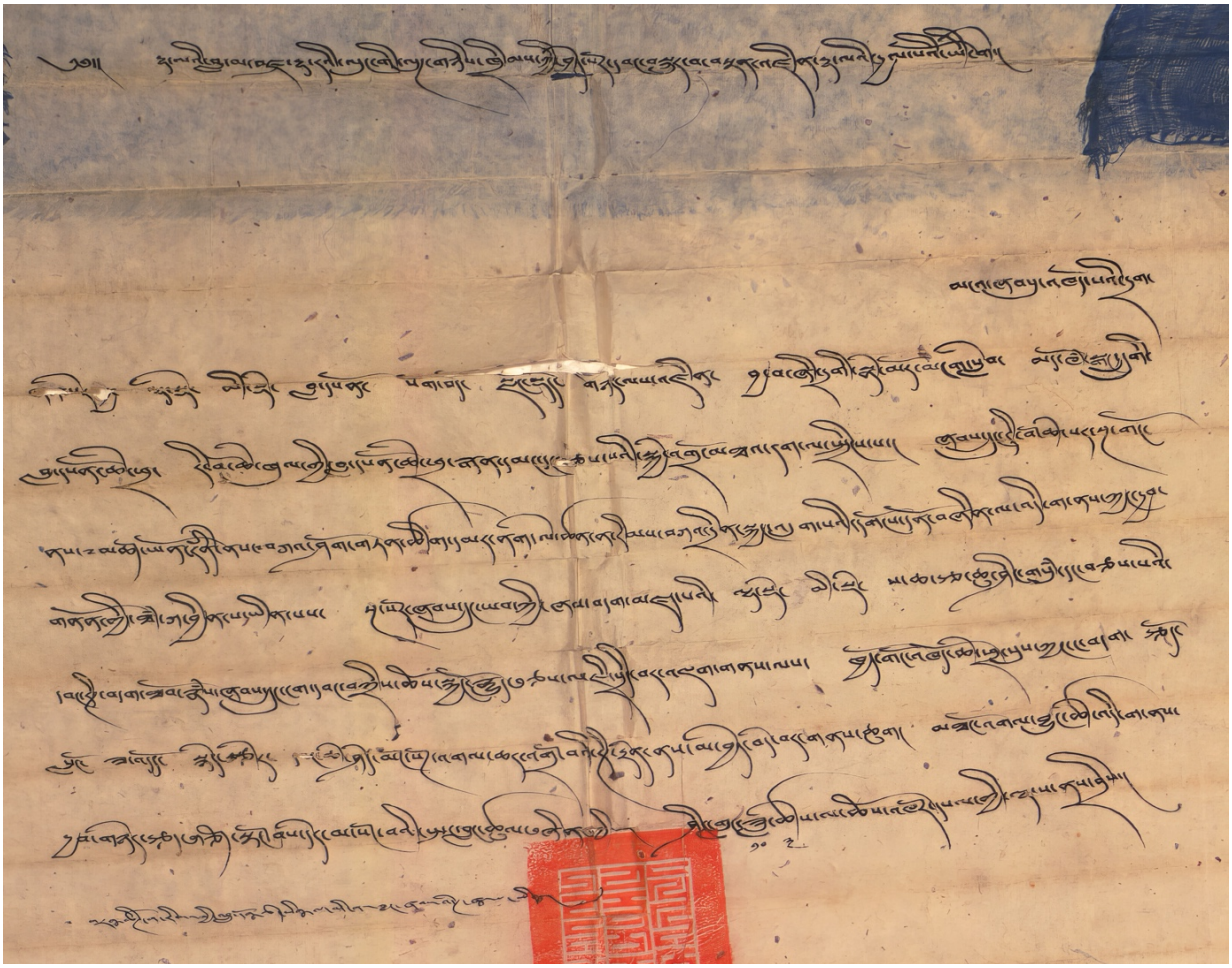
Impression of the seal of Dalai Khan, Khoshot king of Tibet (r. 1671–1701), from 1685[273]



5.3 x 5.3 (3.7 x 3.8) cm

(1) *sha ba di ni /*
(2) *ba ri ga chi /*
(3) *da la’i khan*





[273] KDL: 012 2-1/#/93/1/4 (ID 2091).

SEAL 73

Impression of *qinwang* Blo bzang bstan ’dzin alias Lopsang Danjin, head of the provisional military government in Lhasa, from 1721[274]

4.1 x 4.2 (2.6 x 2.6) cm

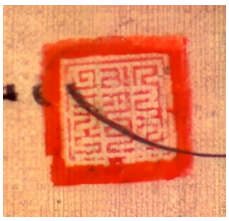
(1) *Z blo bzang*
(2) *bstan ´dzin*
(3) *gyi tham ka //*

„Seal of Blo bzang bstan ’dzin”

An incorrect tracing of this seal impression can be found in the version of the catalog included in the *Long ba’i dmigs bu*, which was edited and published by Chab spel and Ma grong.[275]

SEAL 74

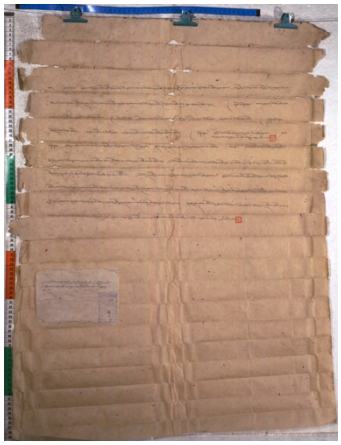
Impression of a *sel dam* on a document from 1831[276]



1.3 x 1.3 (1.0 x 1.0) cm

(1) *Z bde*
(2) *skyid*
(3) *’phel/*

“May happiness increase!”



[274] KDL: 012 2-1/#/38/5/4 (ID 1409). Cf. Schwieger 2015, 132–134. For an image of the document see under SEAL 54.
[275] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 54.
[276] KDL: 012 2-1/#/36/4/4 (ID 1389).

According to the catalog of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, this seal impression belongs to a *sel dam* seal of the rTa tshag regents.[277] However, the impression presented above comes from a document dating 1831, i.e. the reign period of the second Tshe smon gling regent Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho (r. 1819–1844).[278]

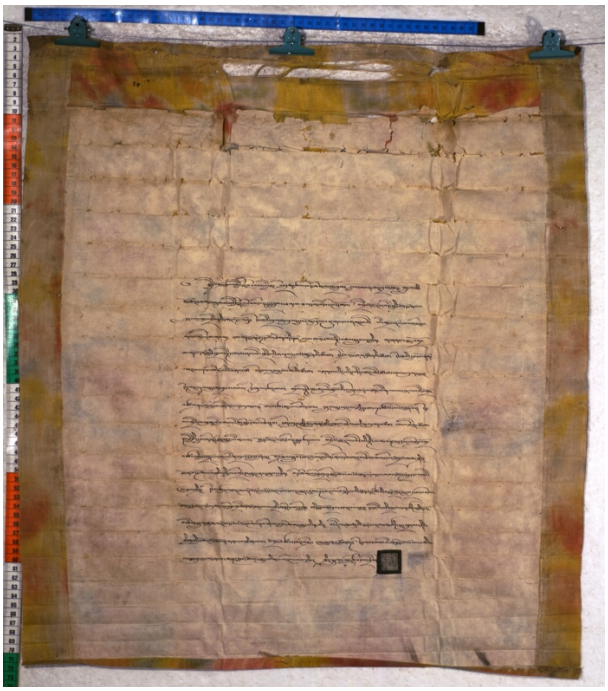
SEAL 75

Seal impression of Khang chen nas *da'i ching sba dur* bSod nams rgyal po from 1725[279]

2.8 x 2.8 (1.9 x 1.9) cm

(1) *lha rgyal*
(2) *kya P*
(3) *lha rgyal*

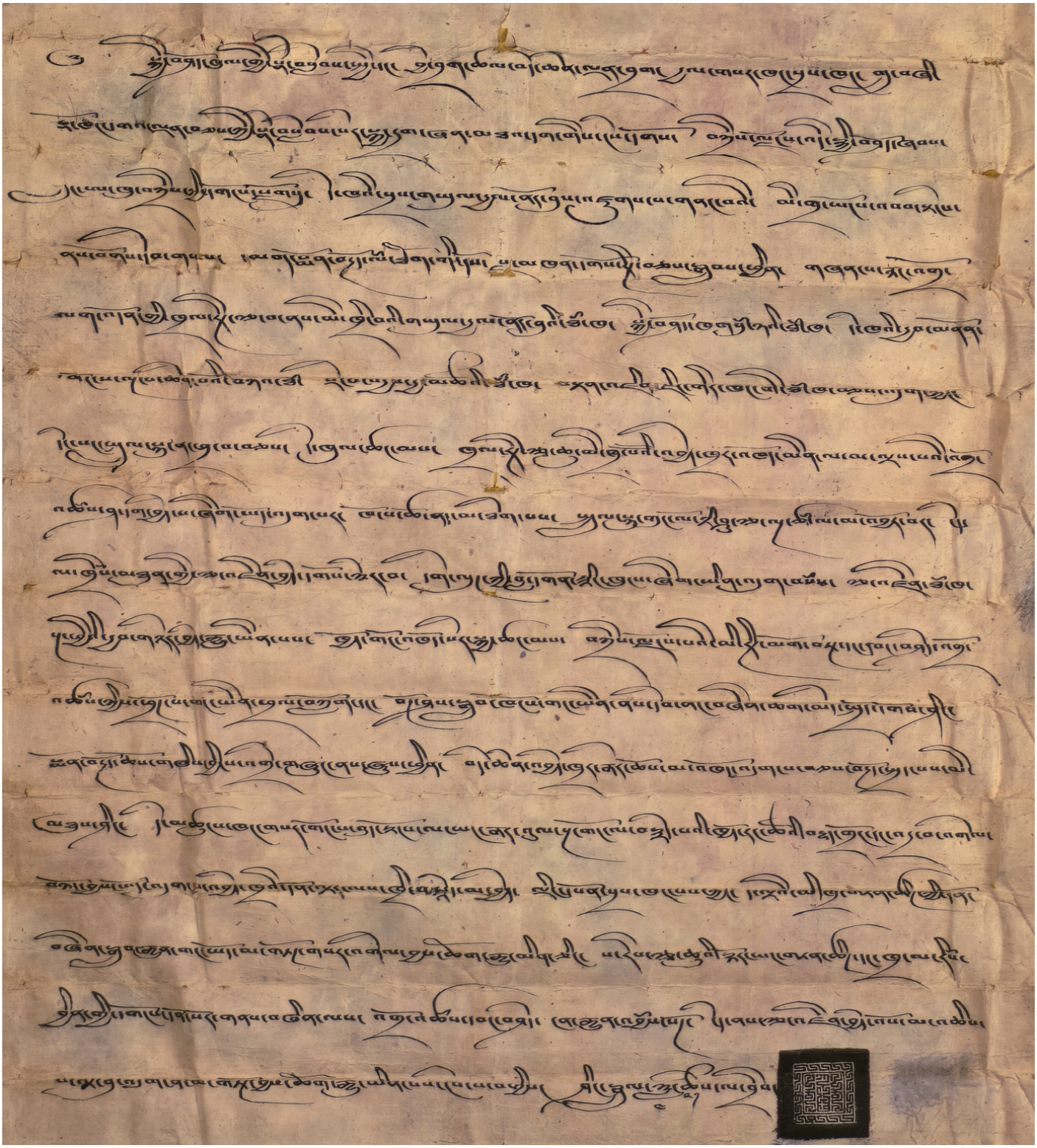
"May the gods be victorious! Kya!
May the gods be victorious!"



[277] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 66. See also Schuh 1981, 132–133.

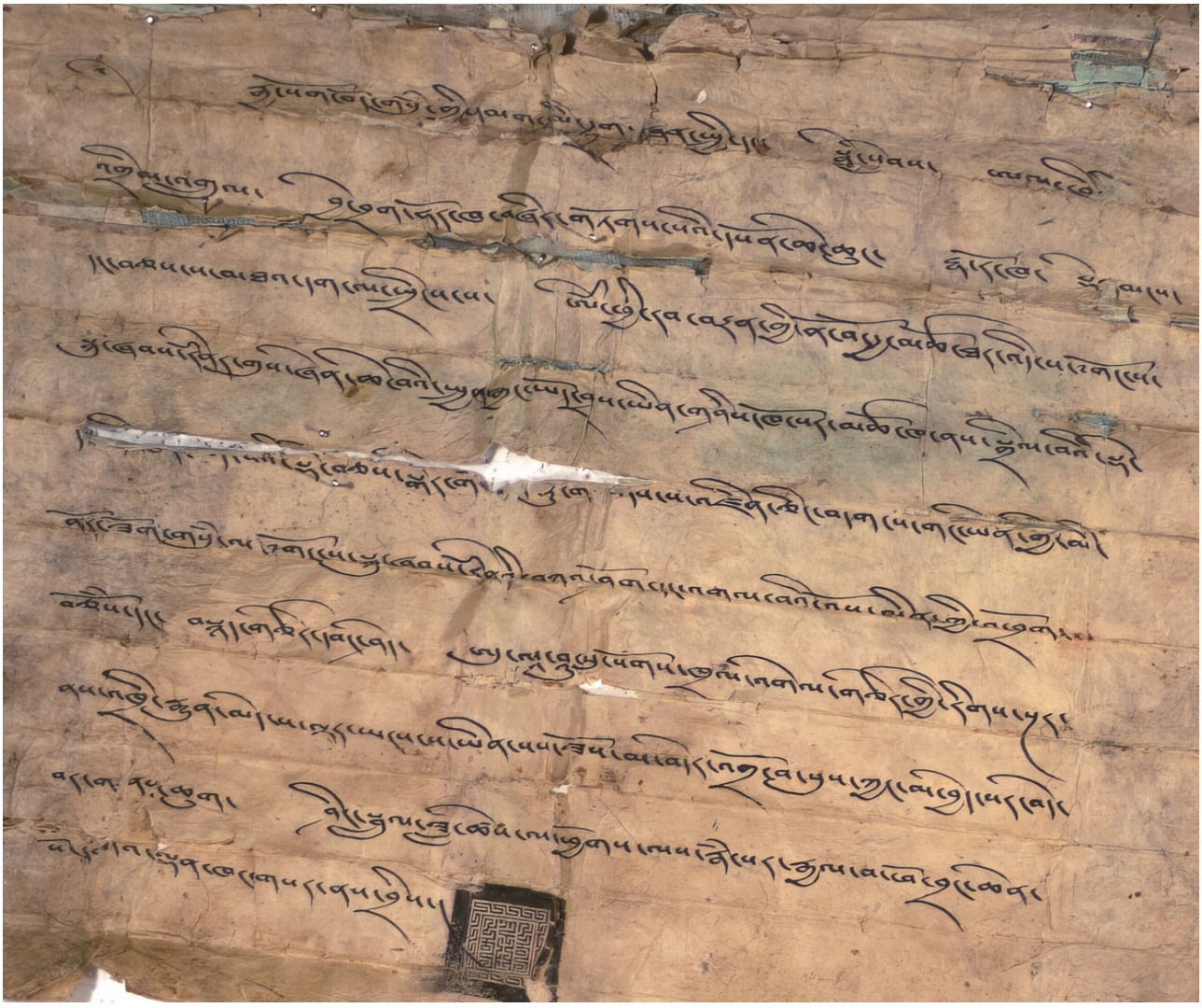
[278] The Iron Hare year mentioned in the document cannot correspond to the year 1771, as Kun bde gling Monastery built in 1792 is already mentioned in the document. (Schuh 2018, 232, mistakenly assigned an image of the same impression to the wrong document.)

[279] KDL: 012 2-1/#/77/24/4 (ID 1925).



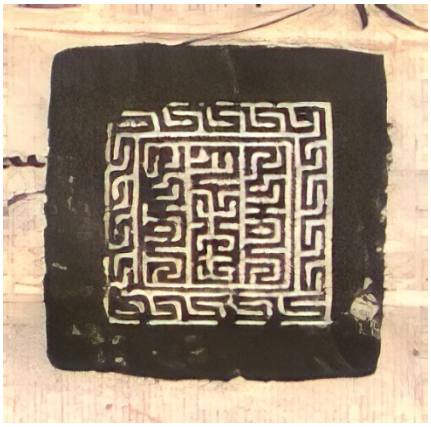
Seal impression of Khang chen nas *da'i ching sba dur* bSod nams rgyal po from 1725[280]

2.6 x 2.6 (1.8 x 1.8) cm

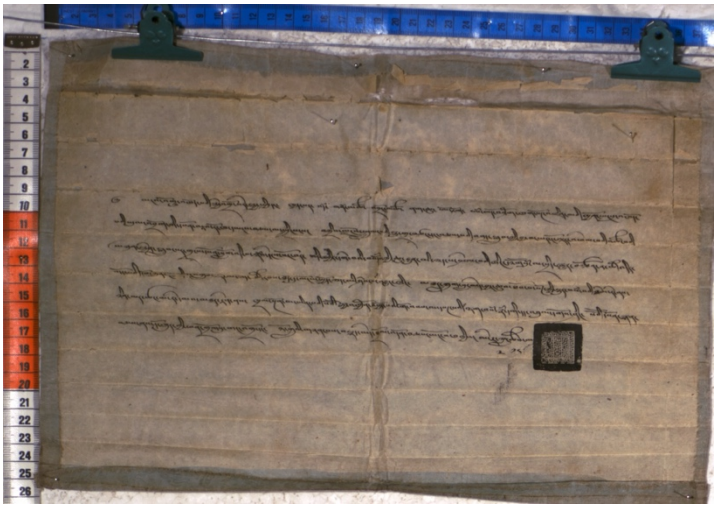


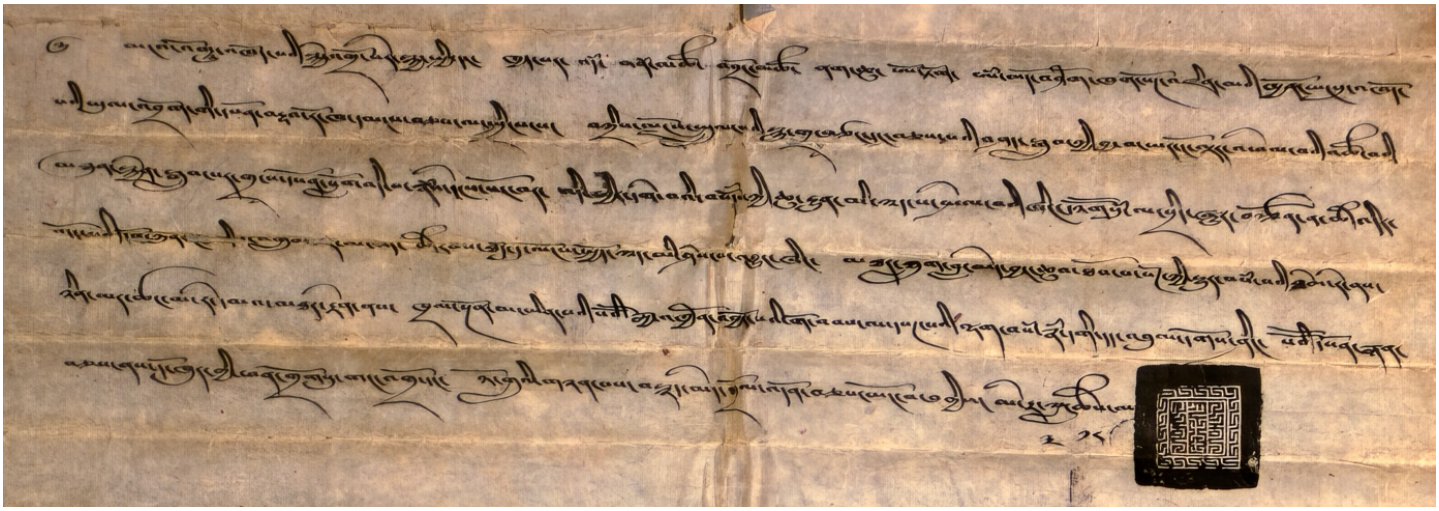
[280] KDL: 012 2-1/#/32/3/4 (ID 1350).

Seal impression of Khang chen nas *da'i ching sba dur* bSod nams rgyal po from 1726[281]



2.8 x 2.8 (1.9 x 1.9) cm





This seal of Khang chen nas in his function as the head of the Tibetan Council of Ministers is listed in the catalog of the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*.[282] According to Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, the seal is preserved in the Nor bu gling kha and made of iron.[283]

SEAL 76a, b, c

According to oral information received by Schuh,[284] there existed three different versions of the so called *bKa' dam bde skyid ma* seal, which is said to have originally been given by the Seventh Dalai Lama to the Council of Ministers (*bka' shag*), newly founded in 1751.[285] At the time, Schuh only had

[281] KDL: 012 2-1/#/57/3/4 (ID 1651).

[282] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 55. Note that the drawing and deciphering of the middle column in Schuh 1981, 62, and Schuh 2018, 156–157, is not correct.

[283] Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 110, no. 13. The dimensions are not given.

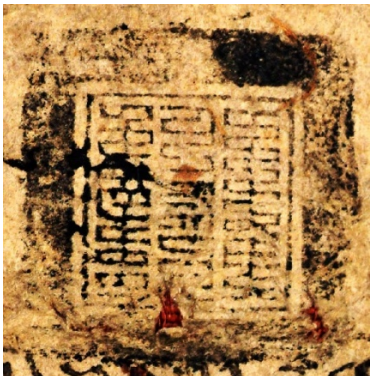
[284] Schuh 1981, 17.

[285] Daowei Cairang jia 2011, 107.

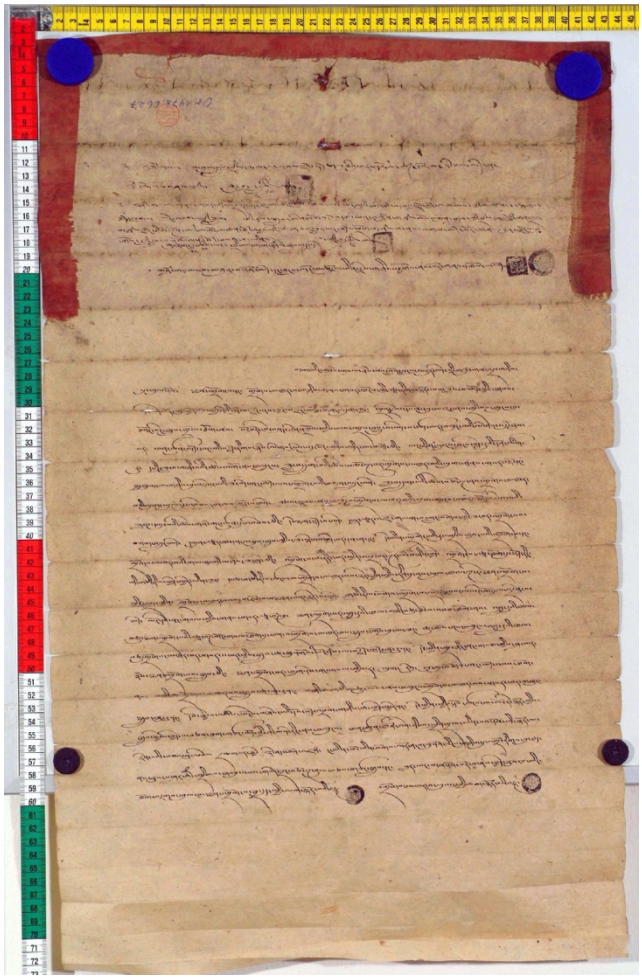
impressions of the second and third versions presented below.[286] All versions show a three-column seal impression. Of the three columns, only the middle one has an inscription in 'Phags pa script. It reads: *bde skyid* ("happiness"). The two outer columns show no writing, but an ornamental pattern. This pattern of the outer columns differs slightly in each of the three versions.

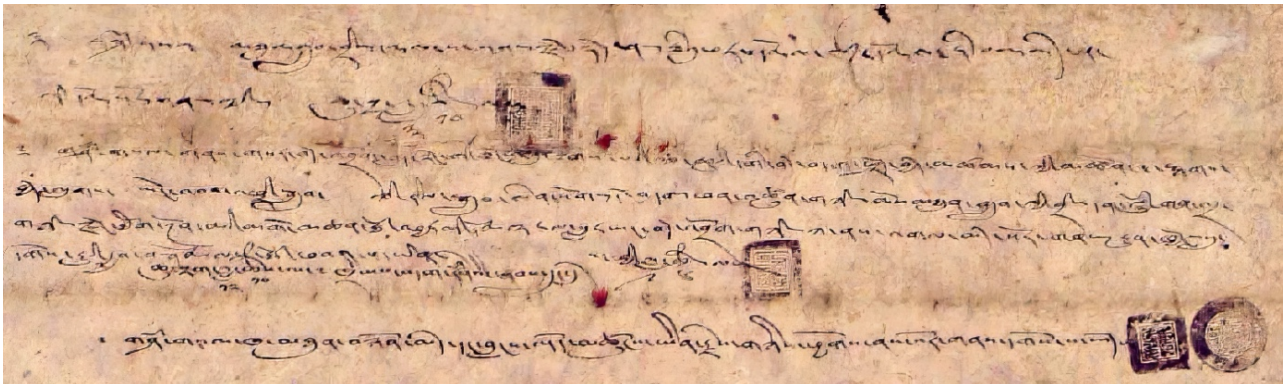
SEAL76a

Seal impression from 1753, 1813 or 1873[287]



2.1 x 2.1 (1.5 x 1.5) cm



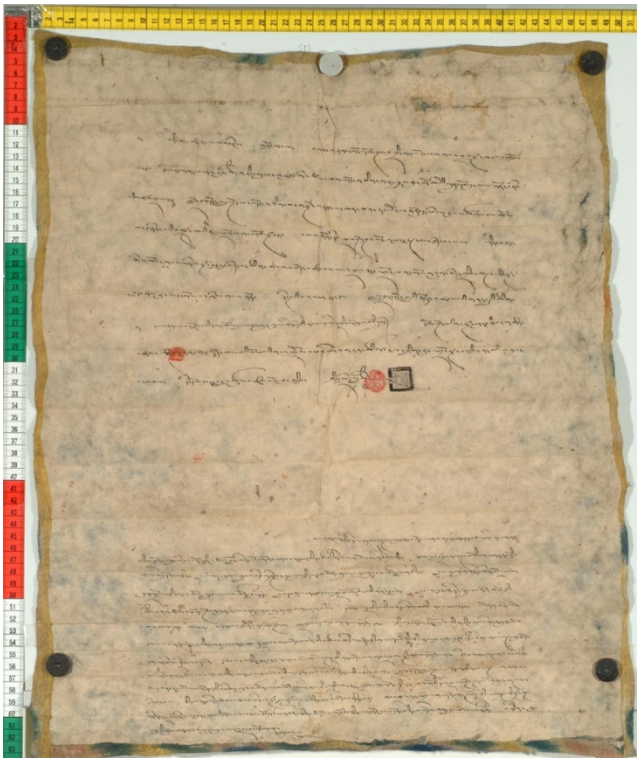


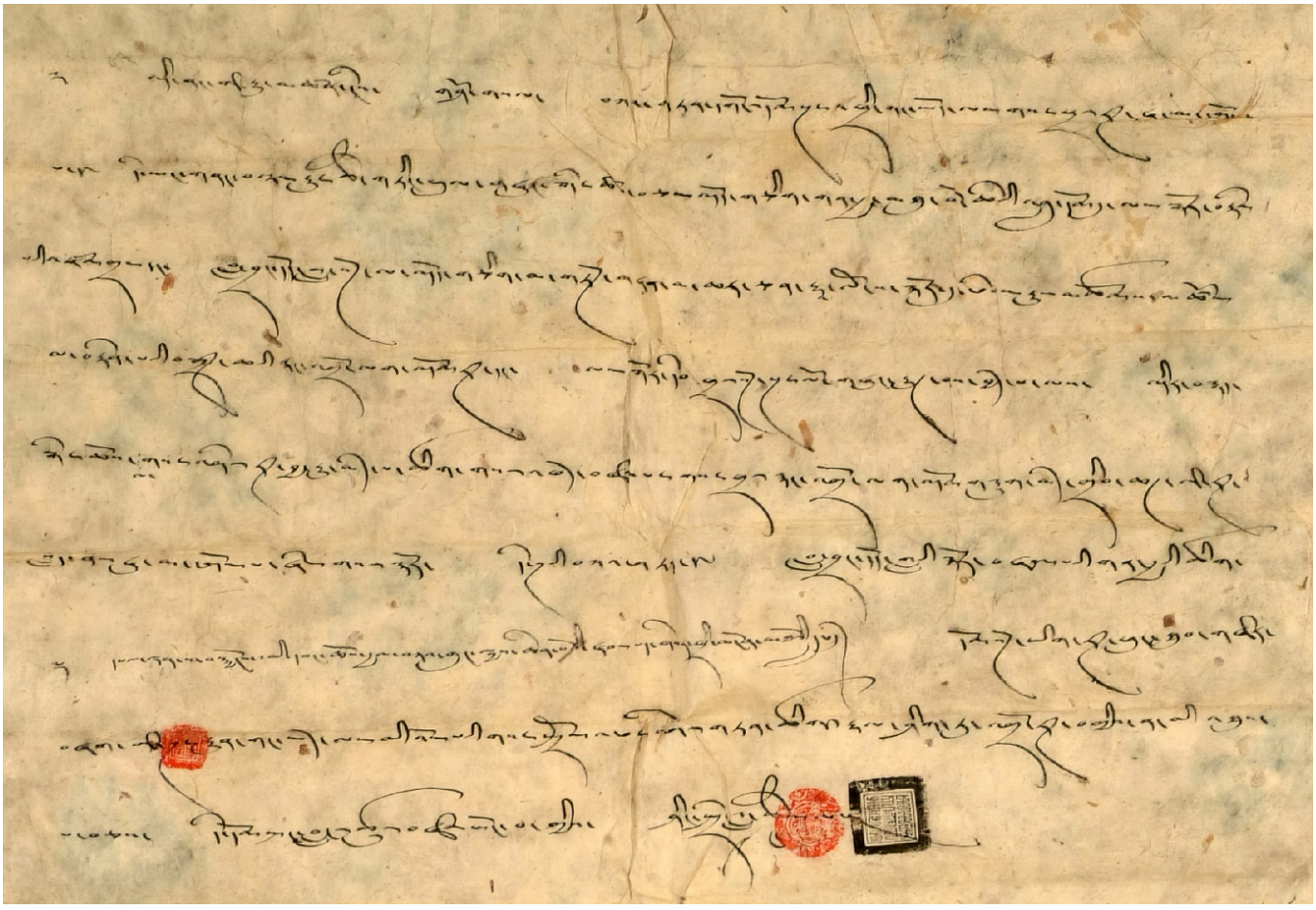
[286] Schuh 1981, 18.

[287] SBB: 0004_SBB6627 (see Schneider 2012, vol. I, 3-6).

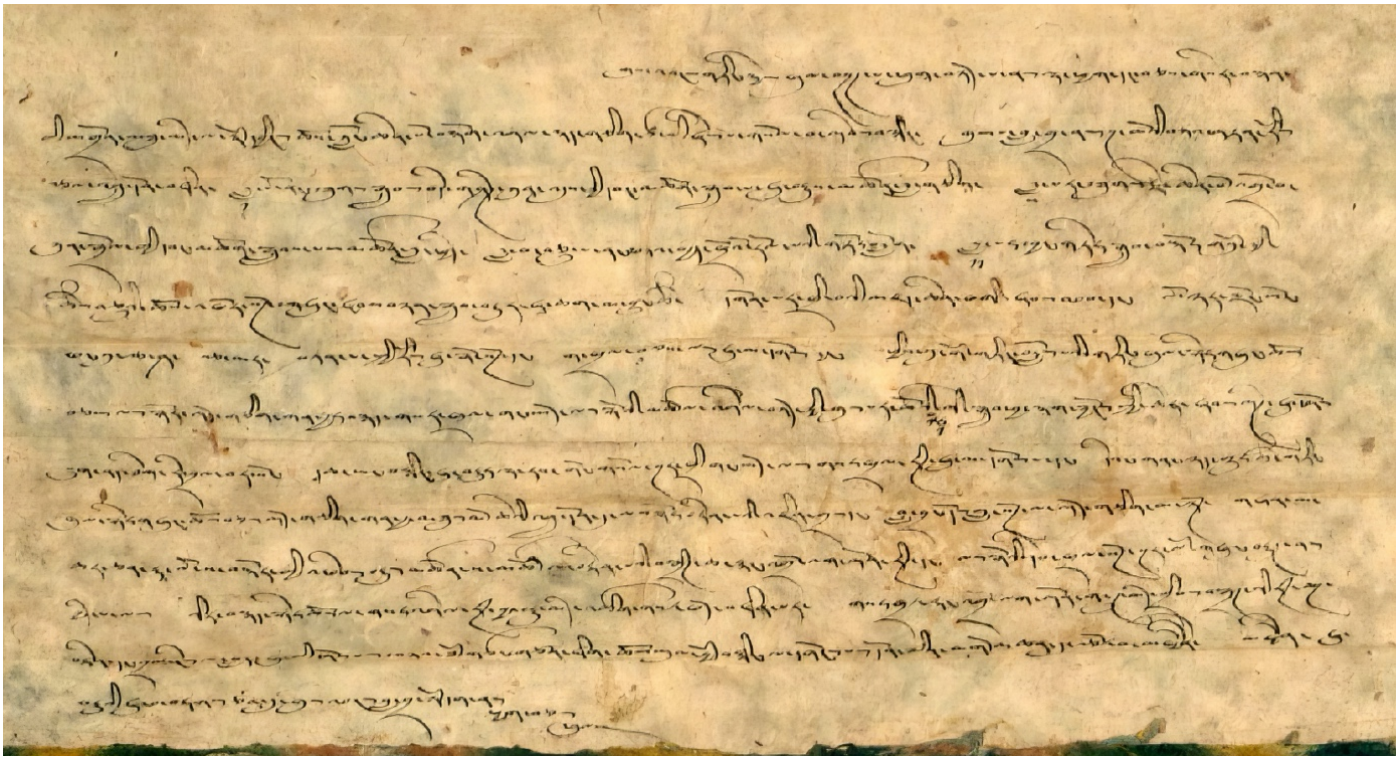
Seal impression from 1764, 1824 or 1884[288]

2.1 x 2.1 (1.5 x 1.5) cm



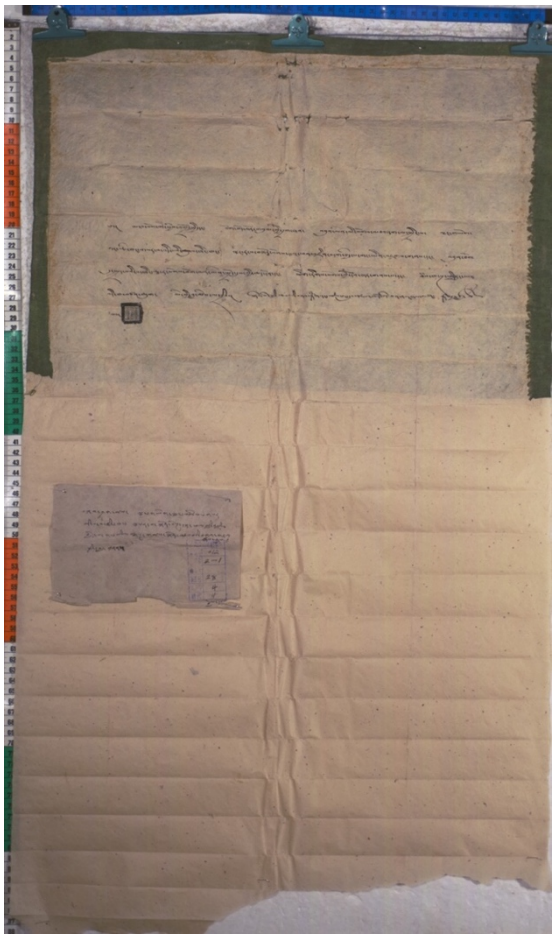


[288] KHD: 0486_KHD.

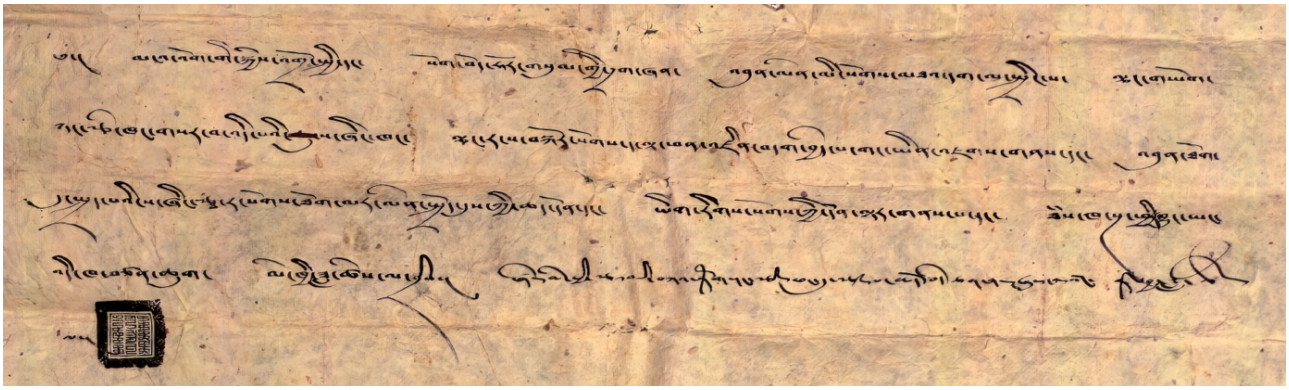


Seal impression from 1885[289]

2.0 x 2.0 (1.4 x 1.4) cm

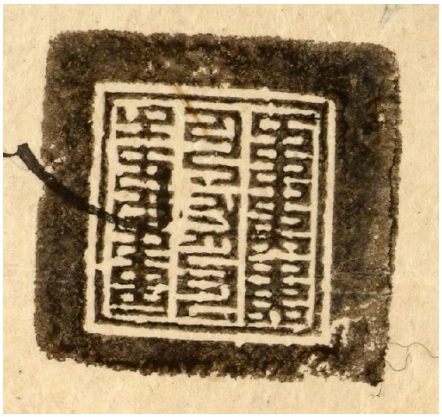


[289] KDL: 012 2-1/#/28/4/4 (ID 1315).

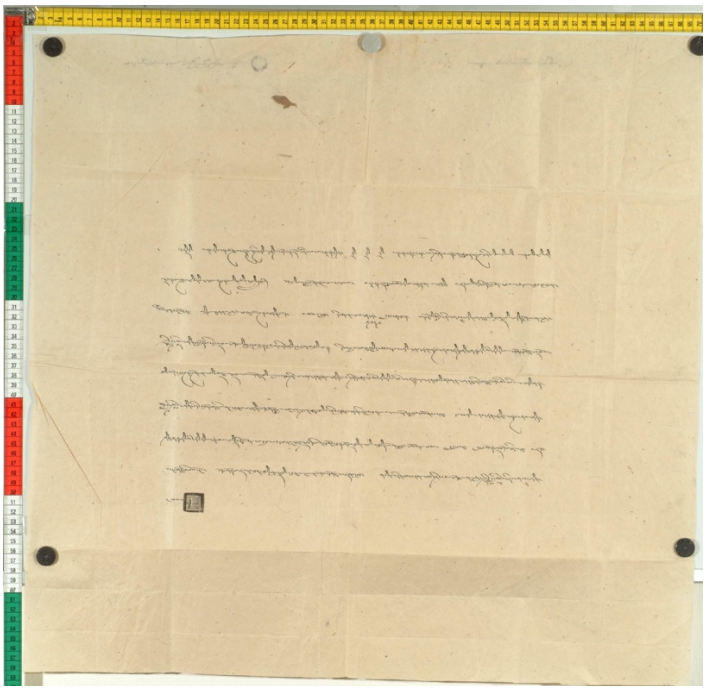


SEAL 76b

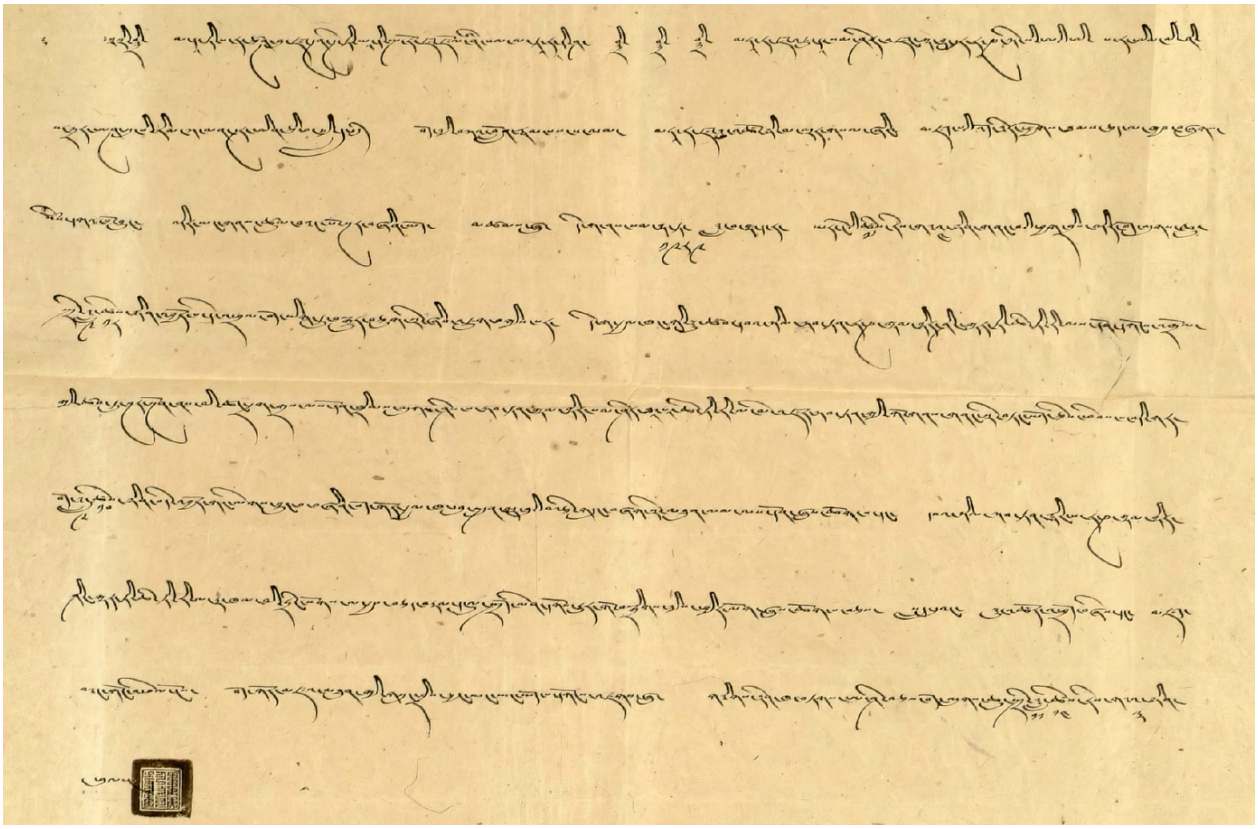
Seal impression from 1933[290]



2.1 x 2.0 (1.5 x 1.5) cm

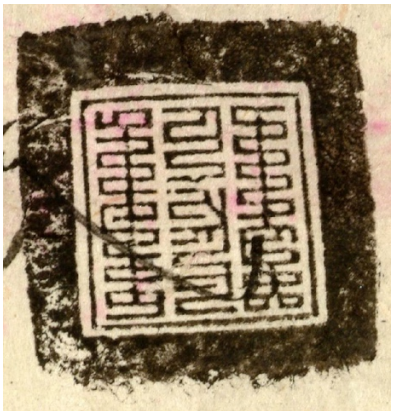


[290] KHD: 0467_KHD_S121.

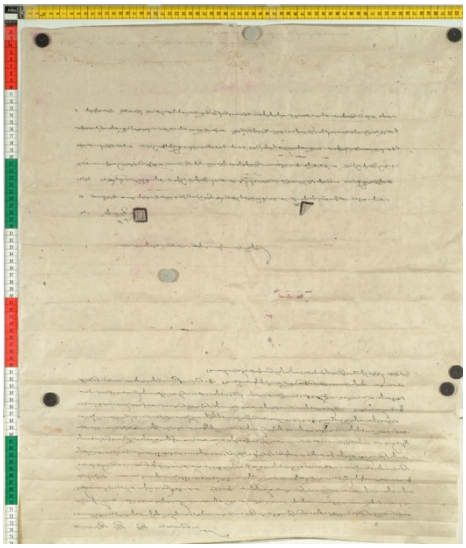


Back of the document

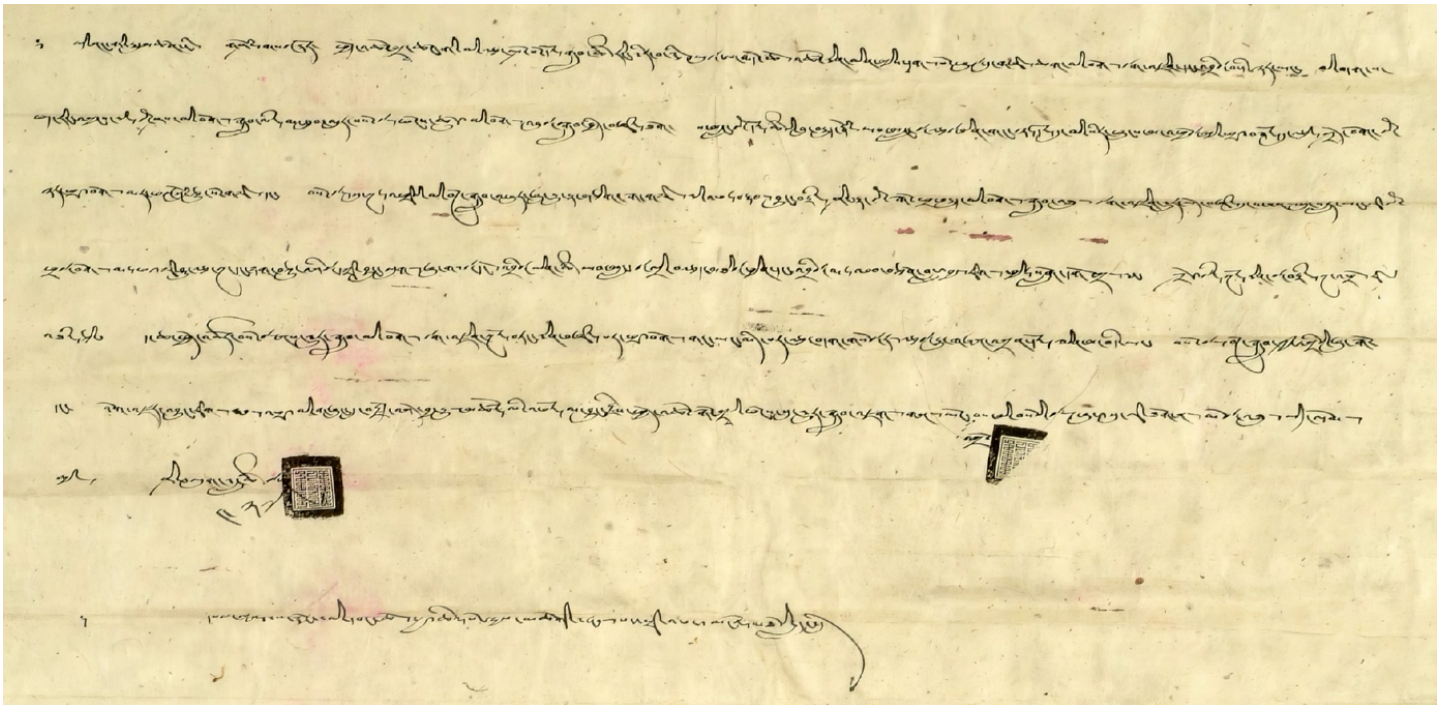
Seal impression from 1775, 1835 or 1895[291]

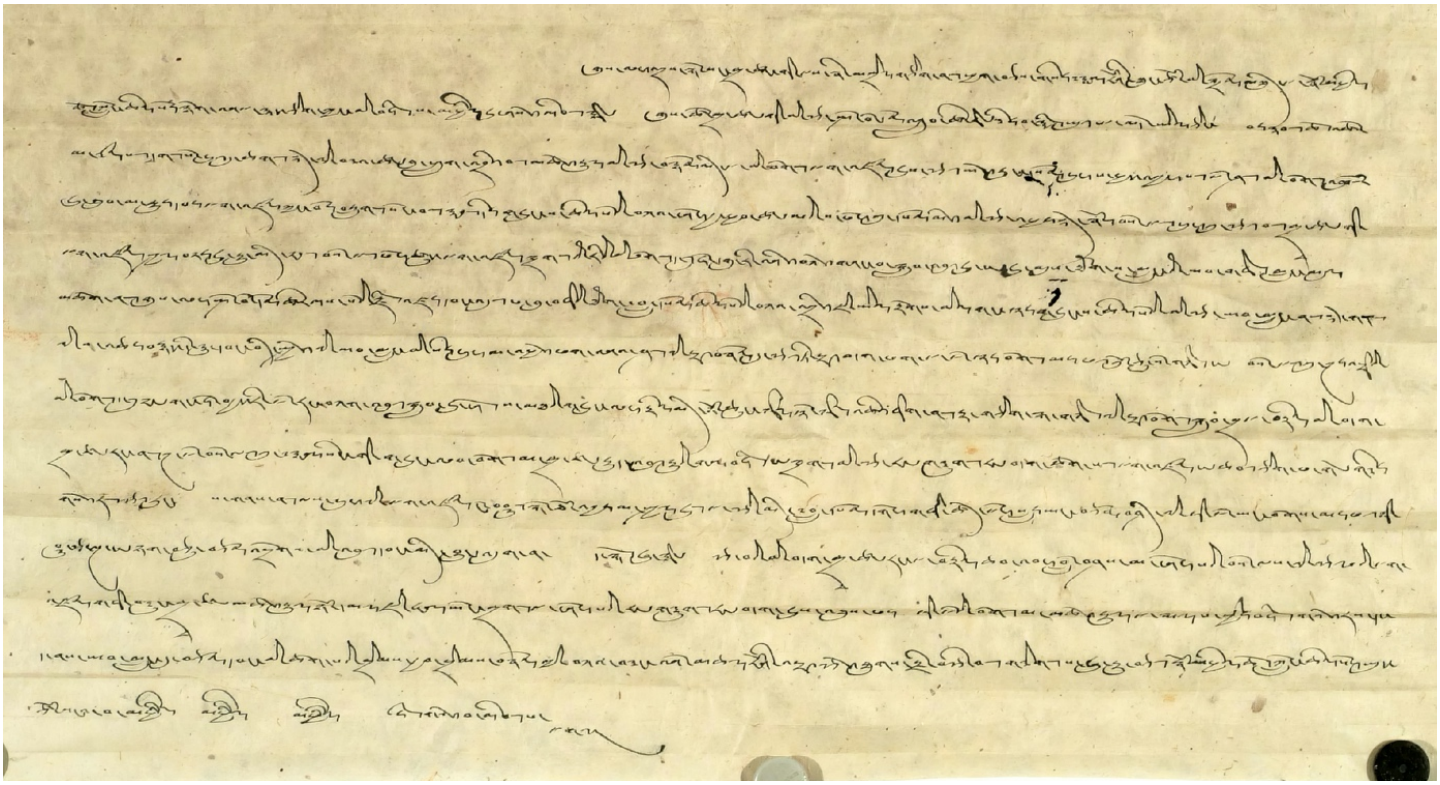


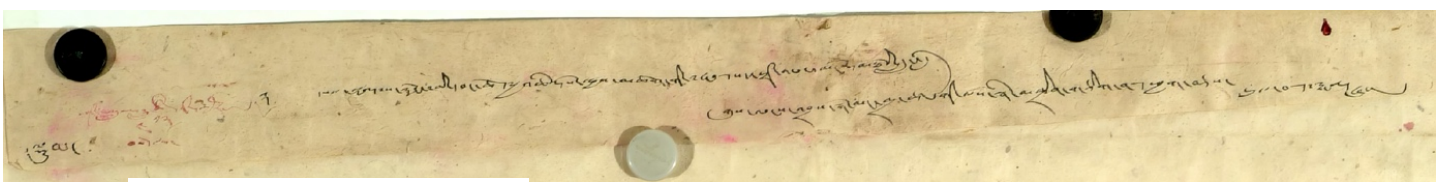
2.1 x 2.1 (1.5 x 1.5) cm



[291] AA: 0594_AA_1_1_51.







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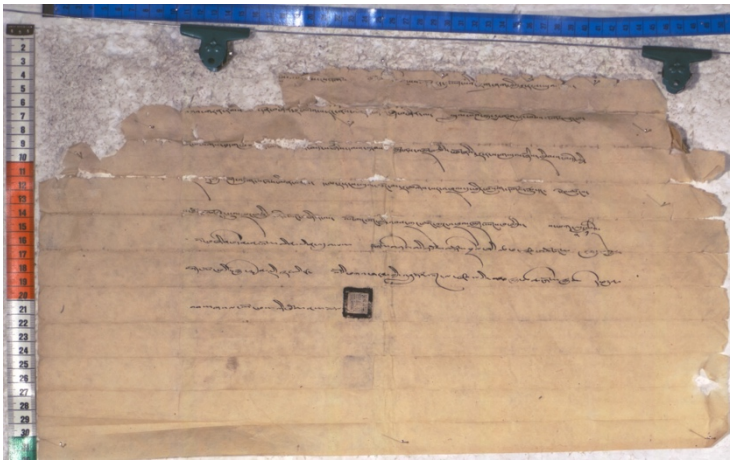
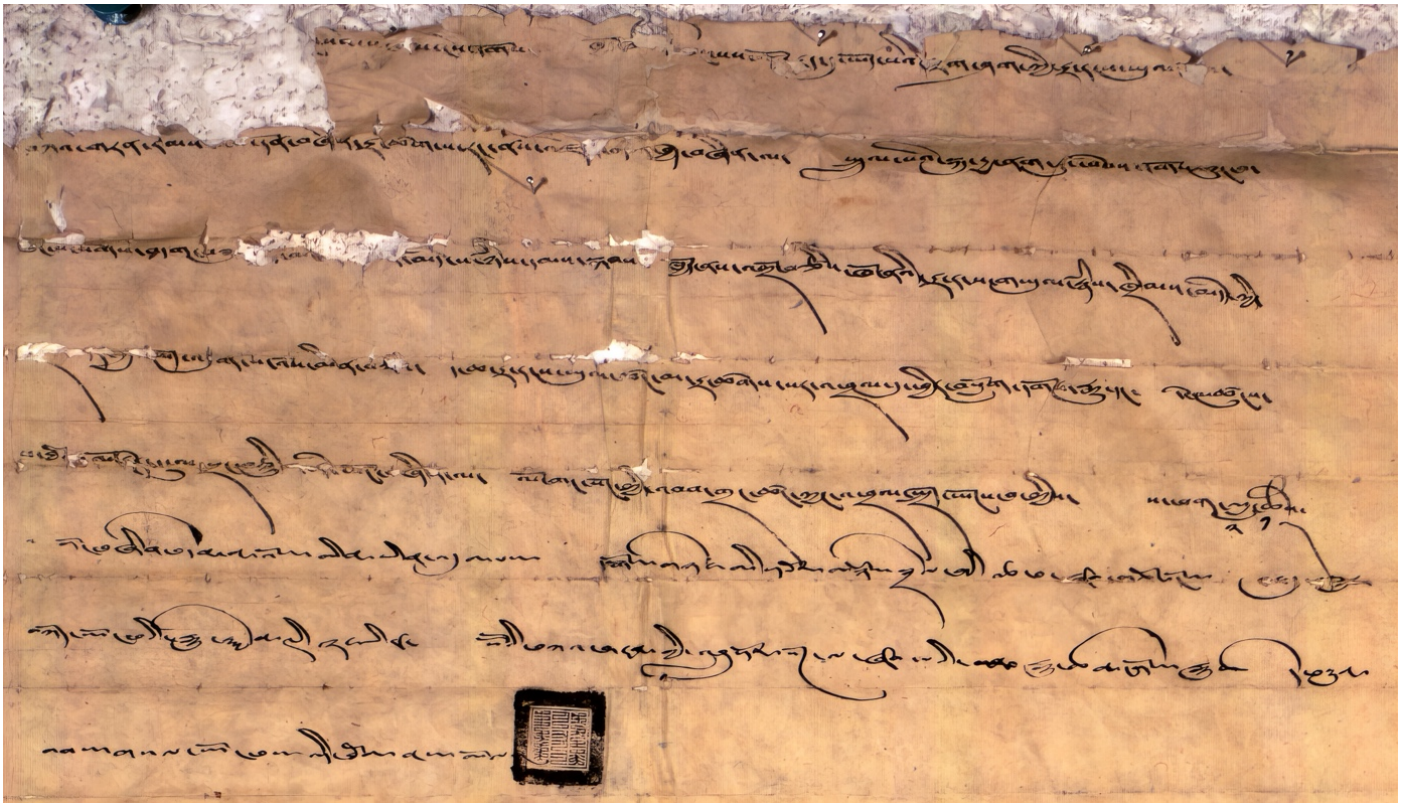
SEAL 76c

Seal impression probably from 1791[292]



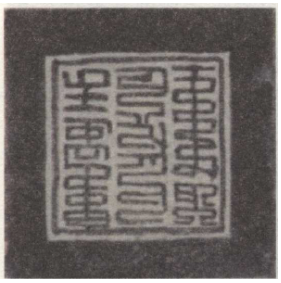
2.1 x 2.1 (1.5 x 1.5) cm



It should also be mentioned that rDo sbis Tshe ring rgyal presents a tracing of the seal impression, which evidently comes from one of the government's seal books.[293] However, this tracing does not match any of the versions found so far on original documents.

[292] KDL: 012 2-1/#/42/9/4 (ID 1450). An image of this version was also published in Walsh 1915a, 14.

[293] Daowei Cairang jia 2011, 107.



SEAL 77a, b, c

From the Tibetan government’s correspondence with the Gurkhas in Nepal after the peace treaty of 1856,[294] there are impressions of three other versions of the seal of the Tibetan Council of Ministers: two red impressions dating 1862 and 1863 and an undated black impression. According to the *Long ba’i dmigs bu*, the seal of the Council of Ministers was also used by bShad sgra ba dBang phyug rgyal po during his time as regent (1862–1864).[295] The middle column shows the inscription *bde skyid* (“happiness”). The ornamental patterns of the two outer columns mirror each other. The upper rim shows a sun-moon symbol. Small differences between the three versions can be seen in the depiction of the sun-moon symbol. The first version also shows an additional frame line.

SEAL77a

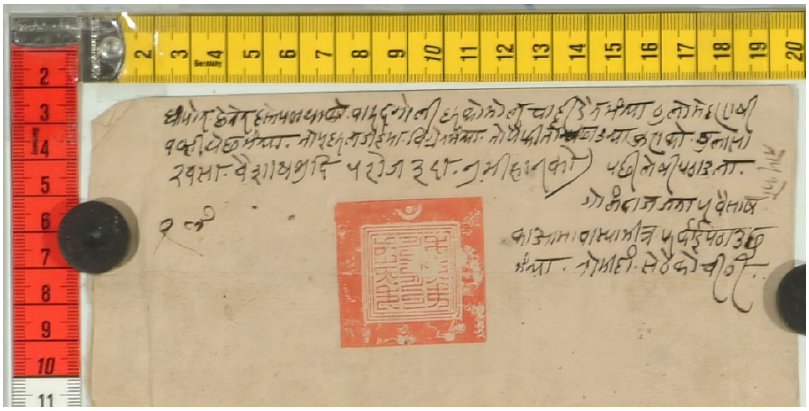
Seal impression from 1862[296]

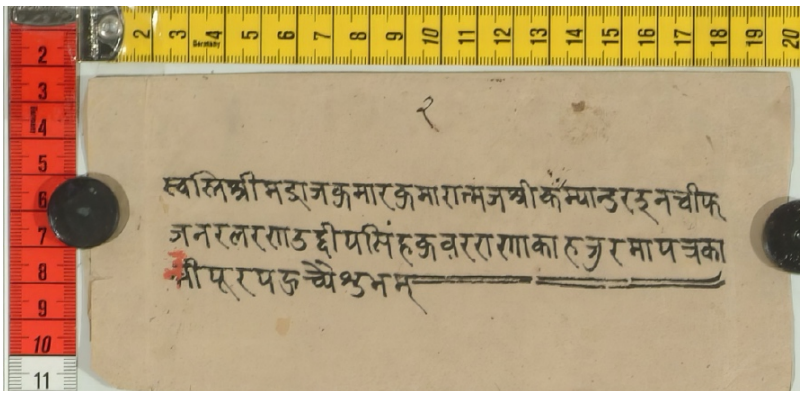
4.1 x 4.0 (2.5 x 2.7) cm

[294] Shakabpa 2010, vol. II, 595–597.

[295] *Long ba’i dmigs bu* 9v–10r; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 28.

[296] KHD: 0542_KHD_S11.



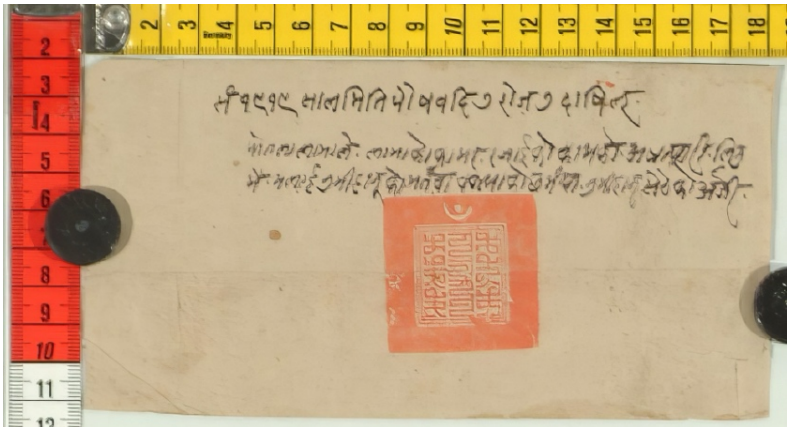


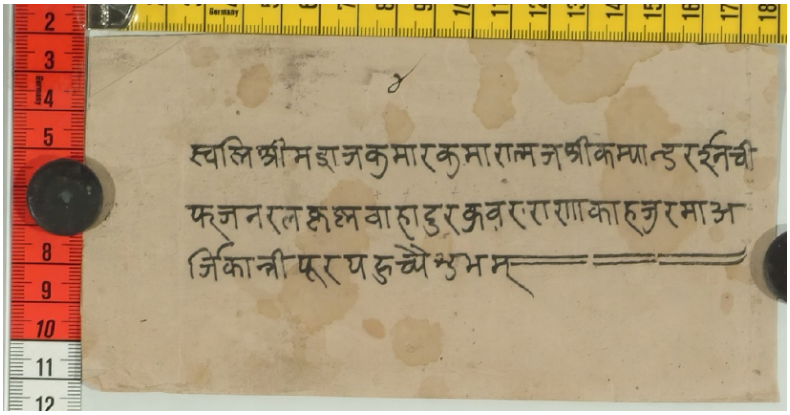
SEAL 77b

Seal impression from 1863[297]

4.1 x 4.1 (2.5 x 2.7) cm

[297] KHD: 0541_KHD_S10.



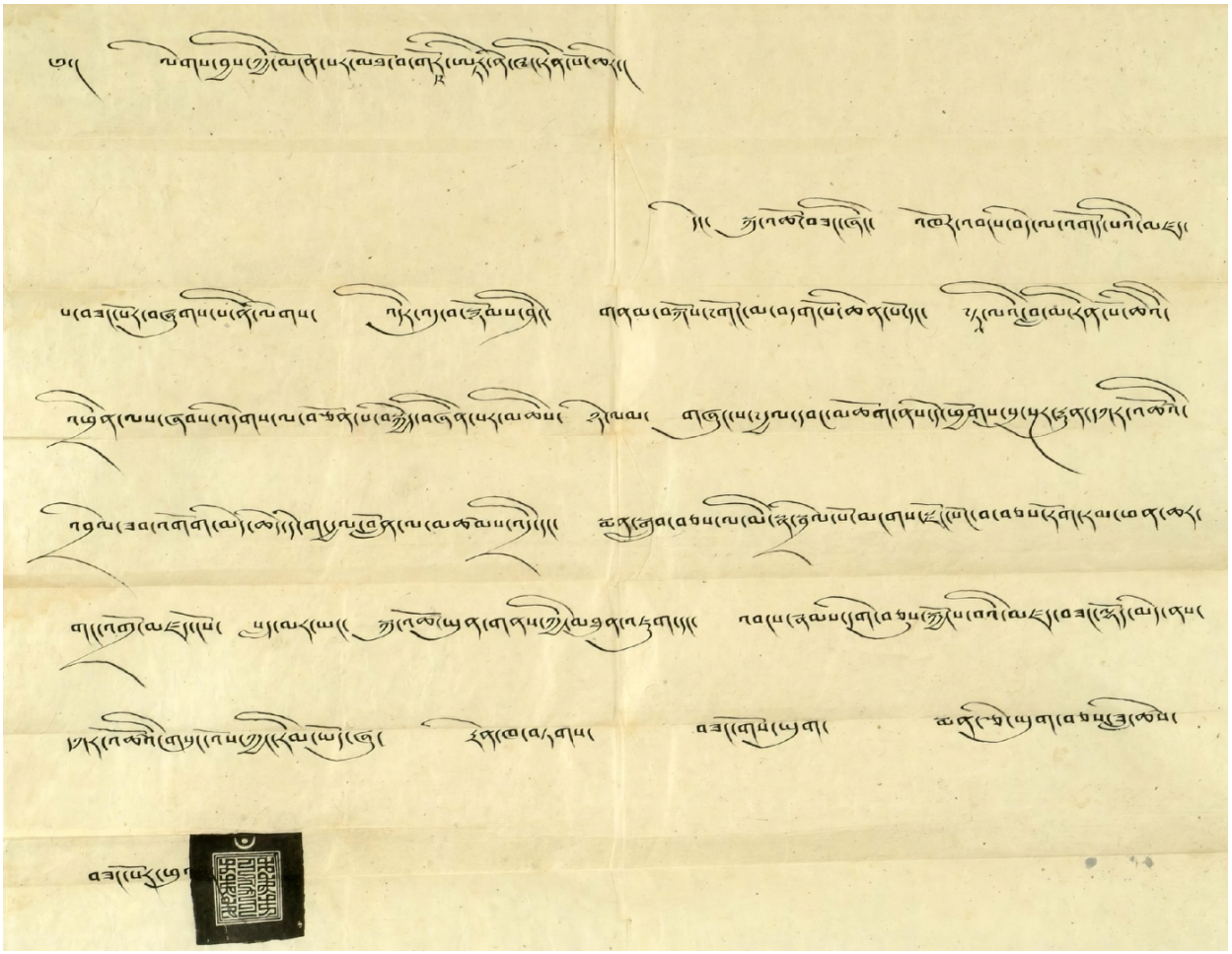


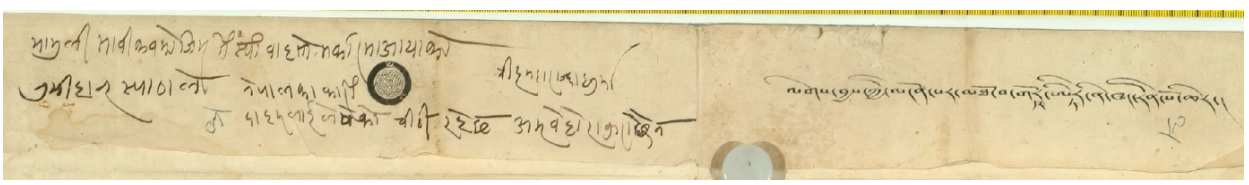
SEAL 77c

Undated seal impression[298]

4.0 x 4.0 (2.4 x 2.7) cm

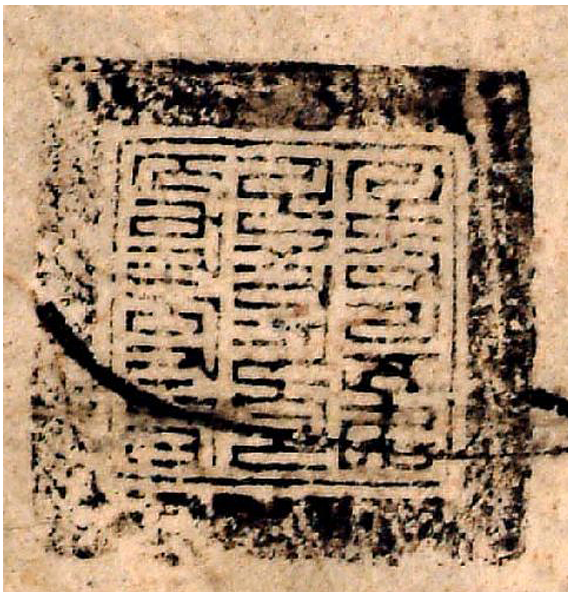
[298] KHD: 0427_KHD_S70.





SEAL 78

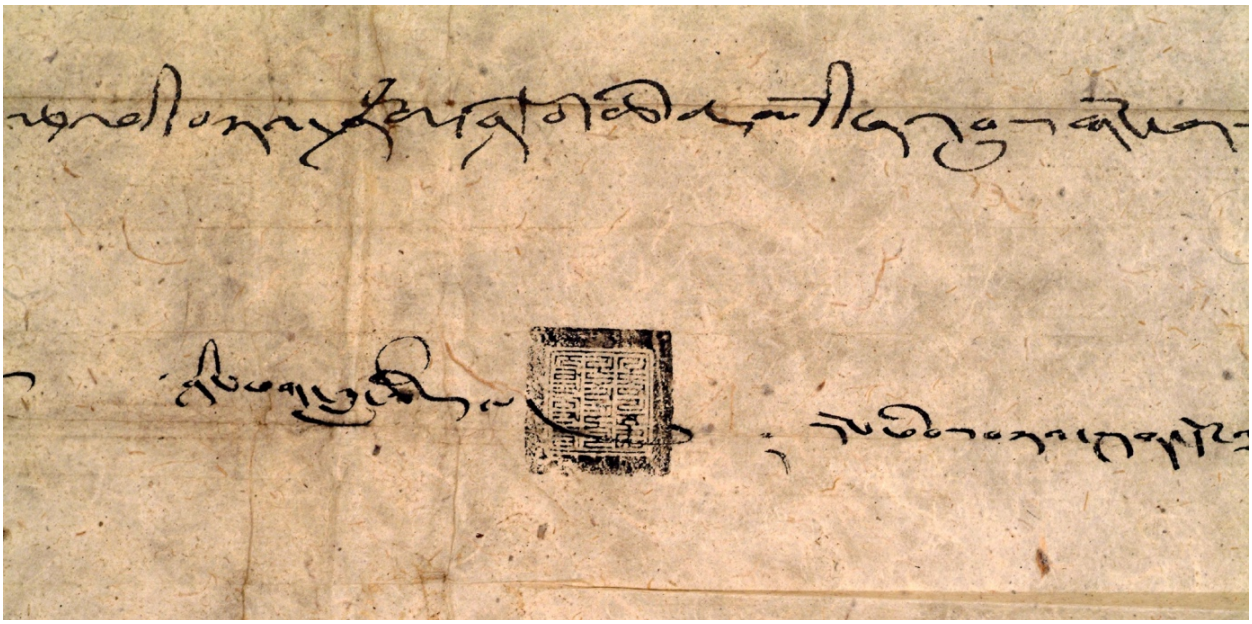
Impression of a seal of the Council of Ministers, dating 1815, 1875 or 1935 (*shing phag*)[299]



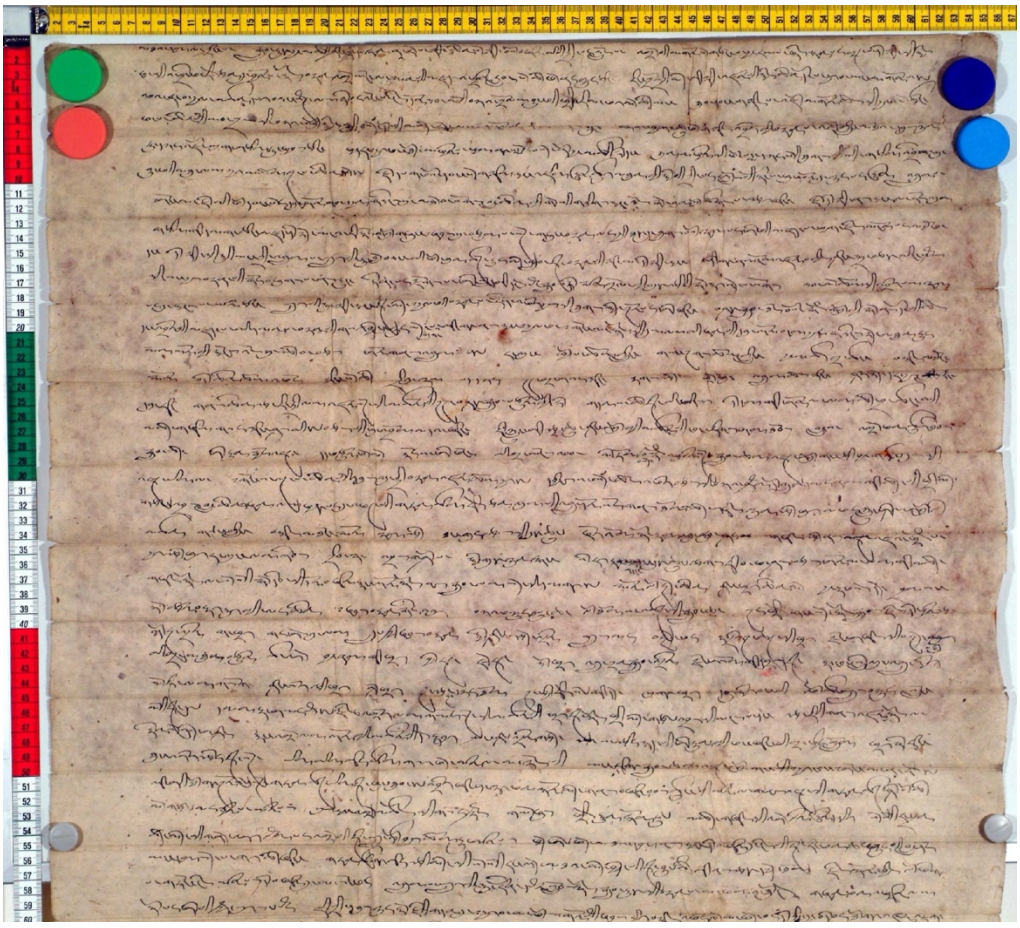
2.1 x 2.1 (1.5 x 1.5) cm

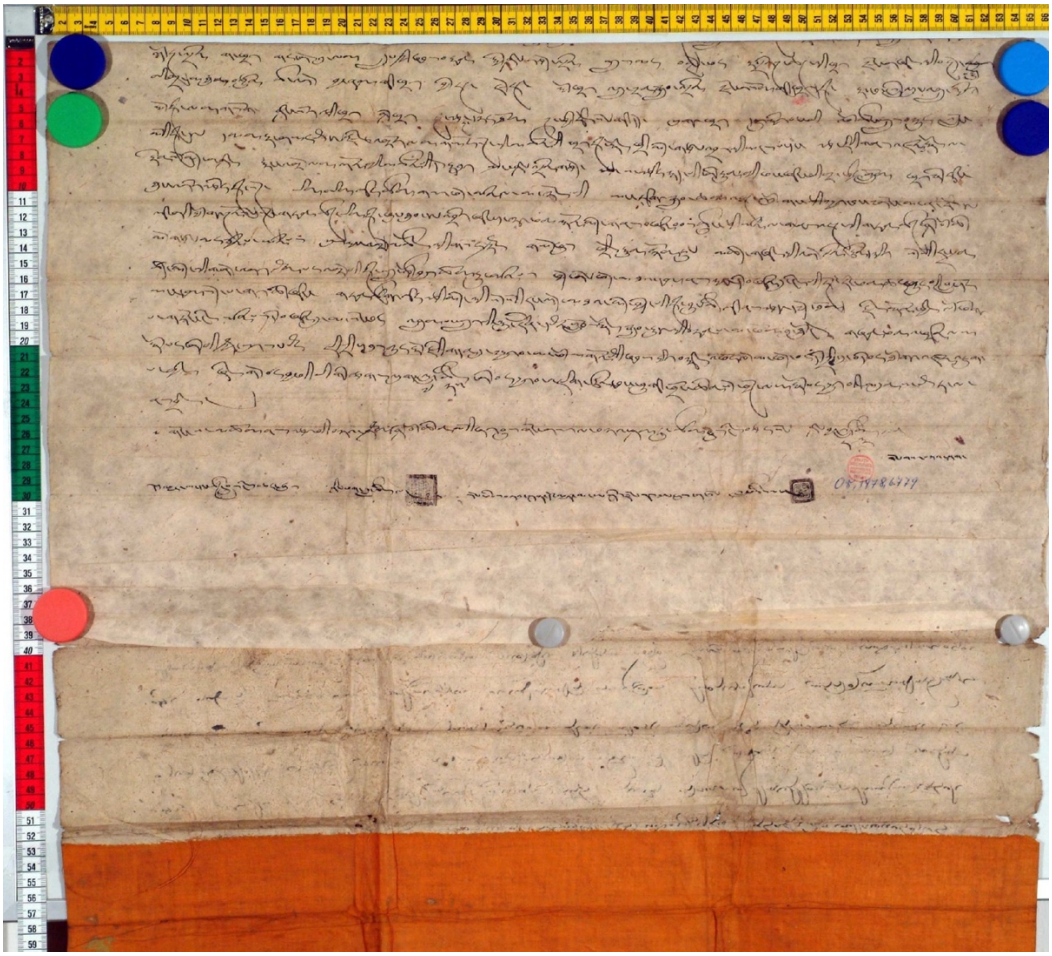
(1) *khams gsum*
(2) *bde skyid*
(3) *ldan pa P*

“Possessing the happiness
of the three realms.”



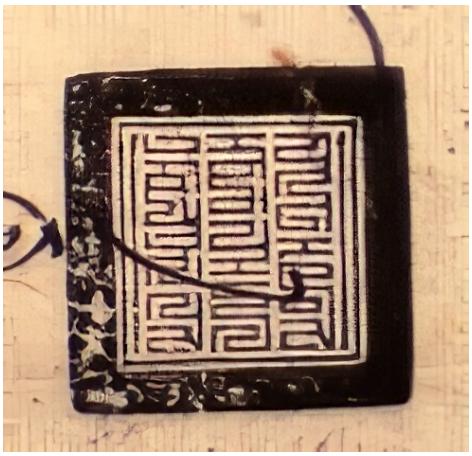
[299] SBB: 0156_SBB6779, cf. Schneider 2012, vol. I, 9, 12.





SEAL 79

The following seal impression has been dated by the Tibetan Archives in Lhasa 1830 (*lcags stag*) and attributed to the army headquarters in Lhasa (*dmag spyi khang*).[300] However, the *dmag spyi khang* was founded in 1913.[301] If the attribution is correct, only the year 1950 would come into question.



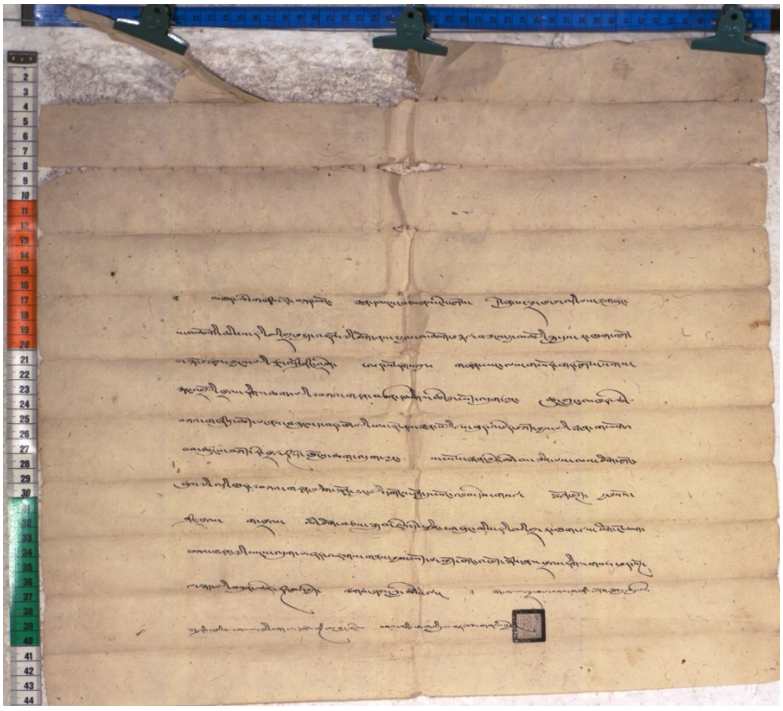
2.2 x 2.2 (1.7 x 1.7) cm

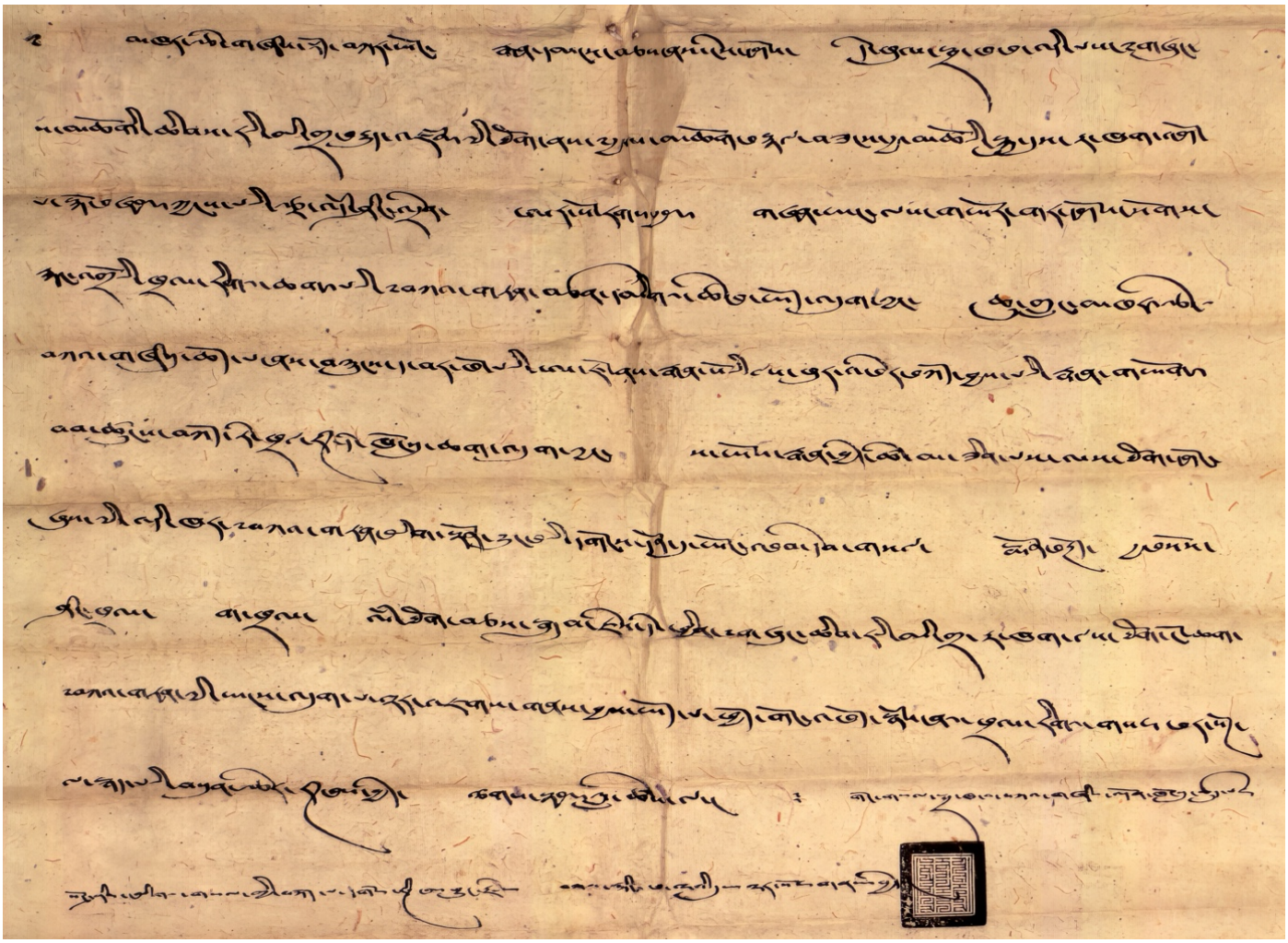
(1) *Z g.yul las*
(2) *rnam par ryal*
(3) *ba'i rtags*

"Sign of the complete victory in battle."

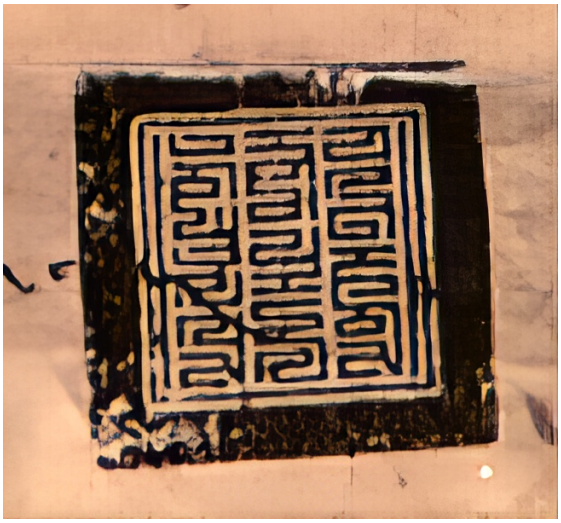
[300] KDL: 012 2-1/#/99/13/4 (ID 2163).

[301] Travers 2019, 218.

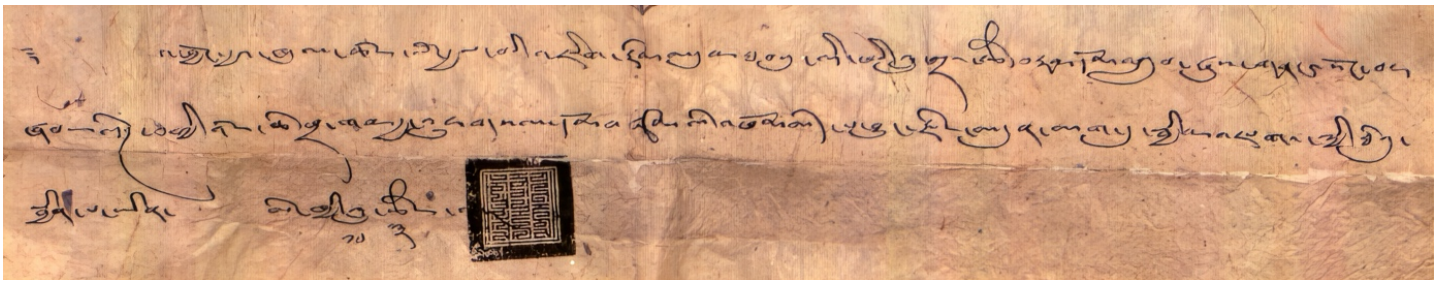




A second impression was dated by the Tibetan Archives 1886 (*me khyi*).[302] In accordance with the above attribution of the seal, however, only the year 1946 would be possible.



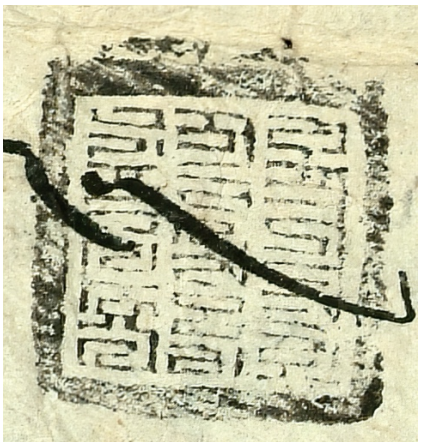
2.2 x 2.2 (1.7 x 1.7) cm

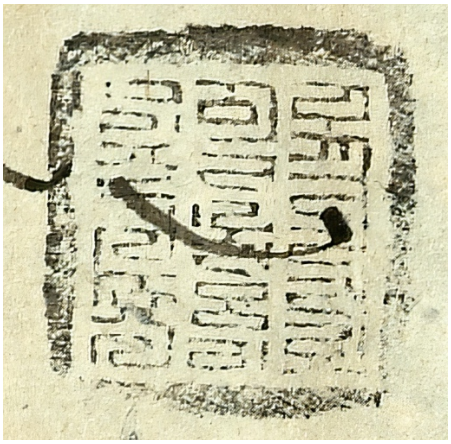


[302] KDL: 012 2-1/#/10/2/4 (ID 1136).

SEAL 80a

Impressions of the seal of the Zhol las khungs in Lhasa from 1898 (*sa khyi*)[303]

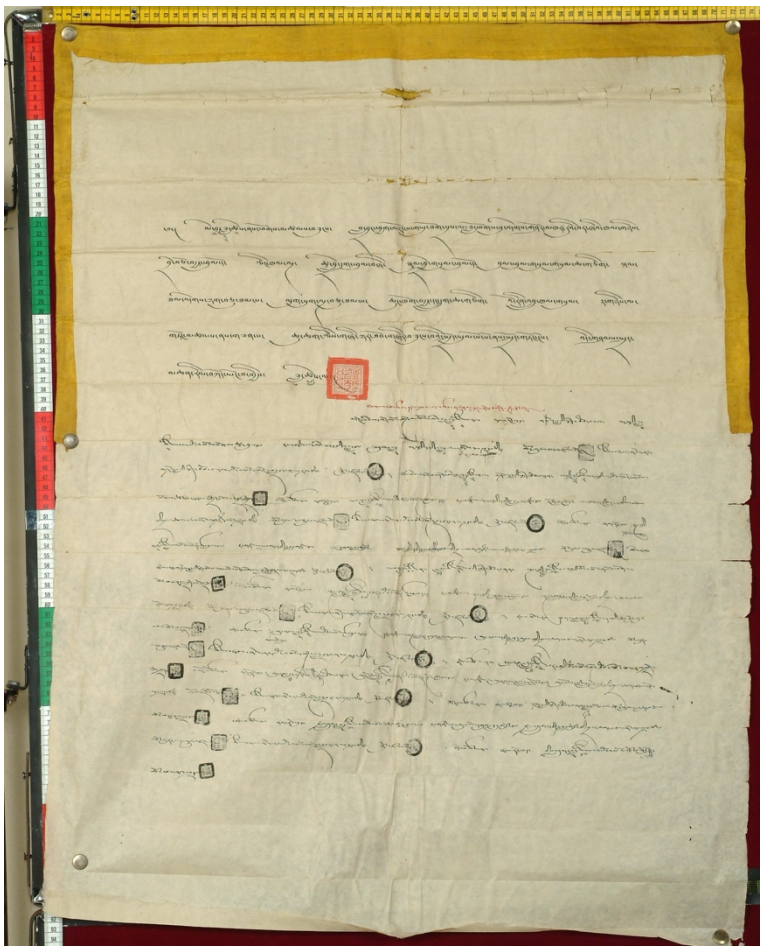




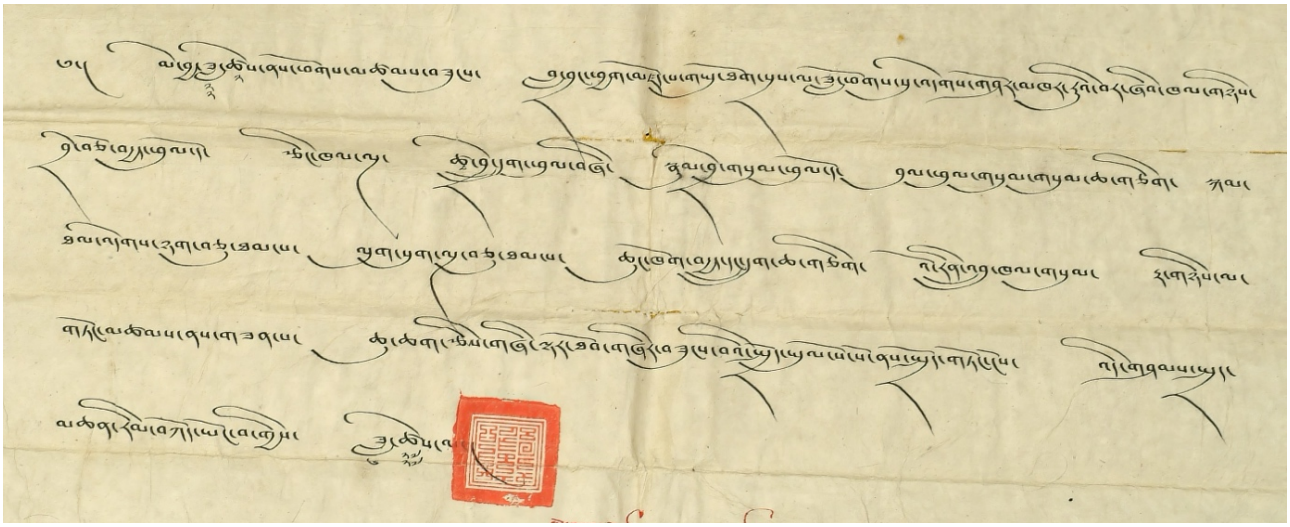
1.7 x 1.8 (1.4 x 1.4) cm and 1.7 x 1.7 (1.4 x 1.4) cm

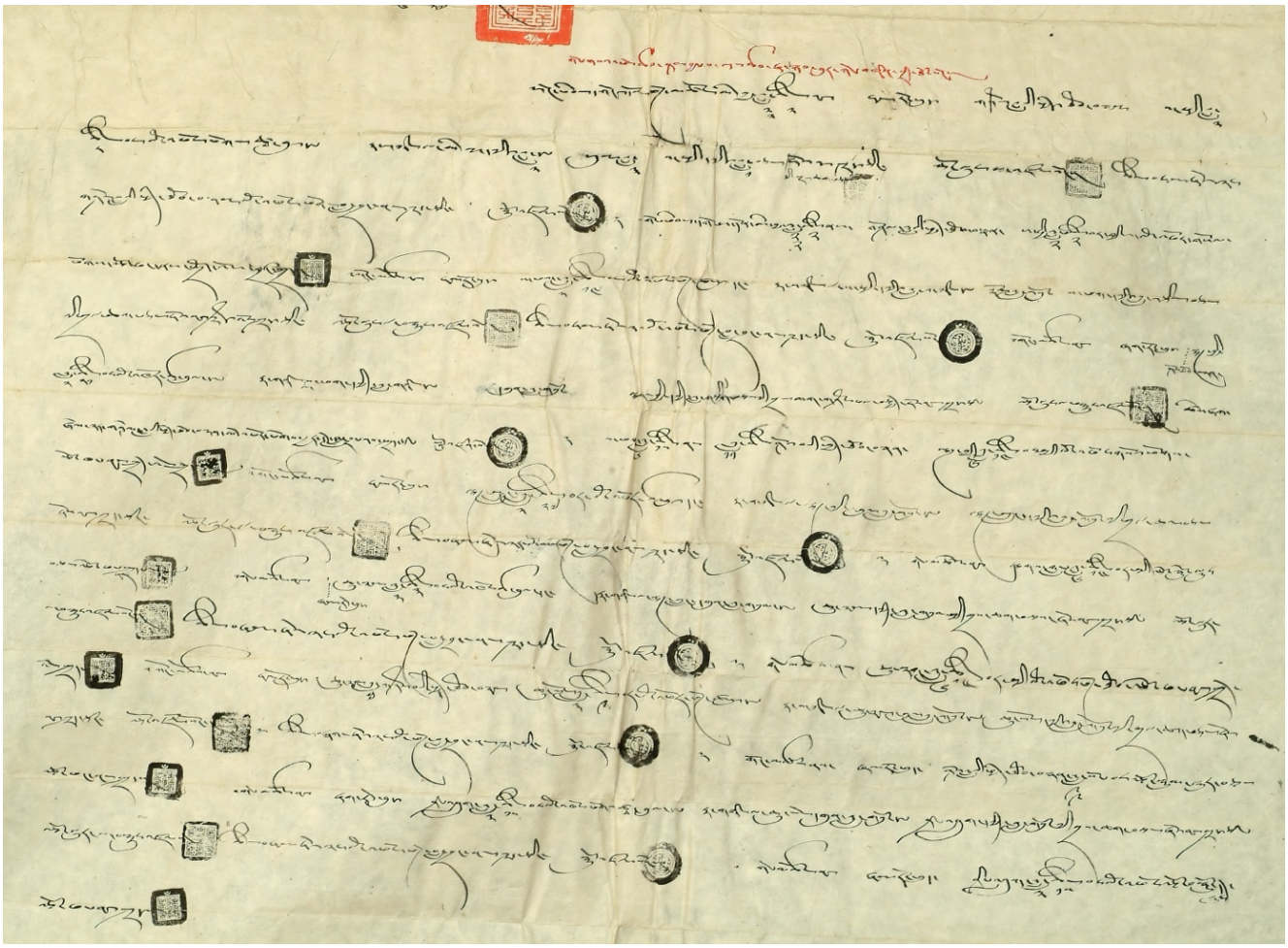
(1) *Z po ta la zhol*
(2) *gyi las tham*
(3) *bkra shis so*

"Office seal of Potala Zhol.
May there be auspiciousness!"



[303] LTWA: 0878_LTWA_57.

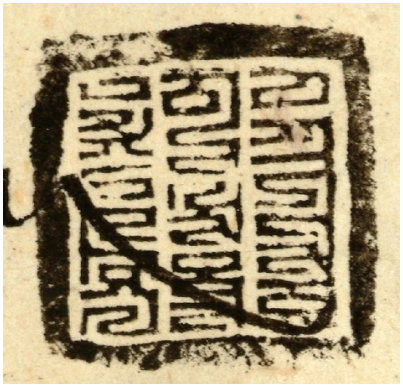


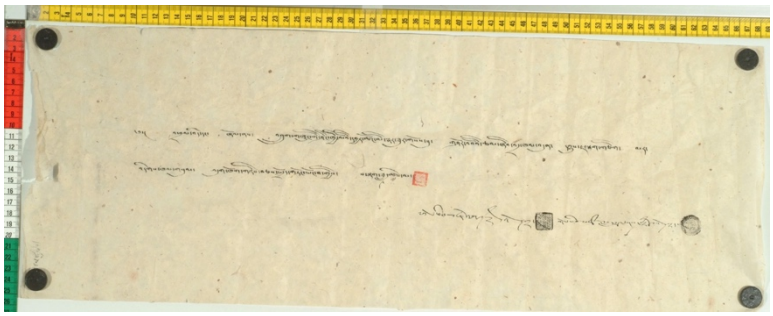


SEAL 80b

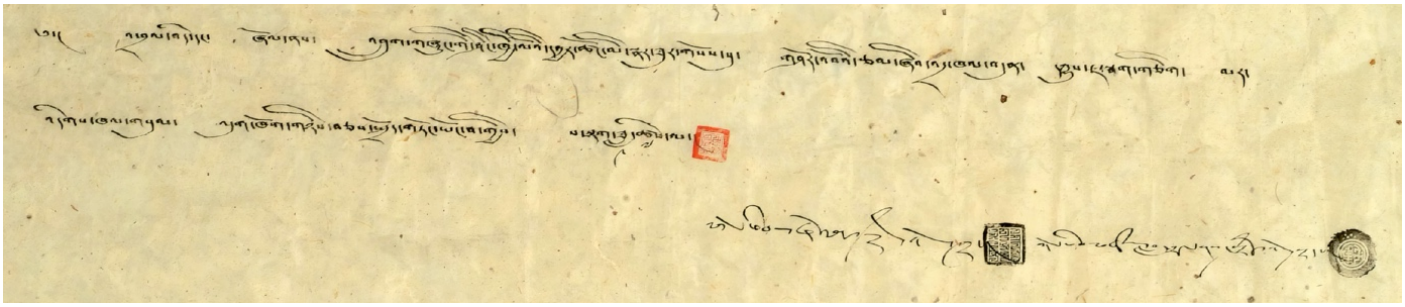
Apparently, an incorrect version of SEAL 80a was also used, which replaced the letter *la* with *’(a)* in the first column: *Z po ta ’zhol*. The following impression dates from 1914 (*sa phag*).[304]

[304] AA: 0603_AA_1_1_60.





1.7 x 1.7 (1.3 x 1.3) cm



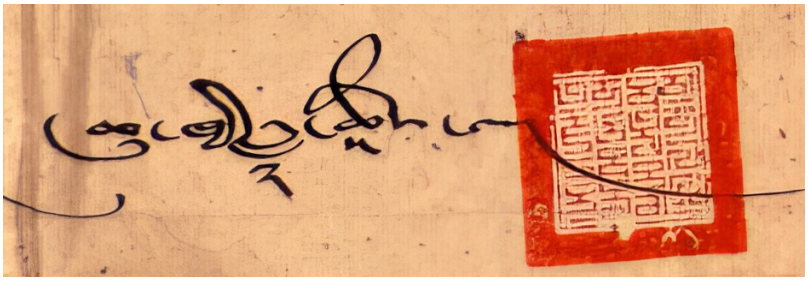
4.3.3 Four-column Seal Inscriptions

SEAL 51

See pp. 135—137.

SEAL 81

Seal of the rTa tshag *rje drung ho thog thu*.

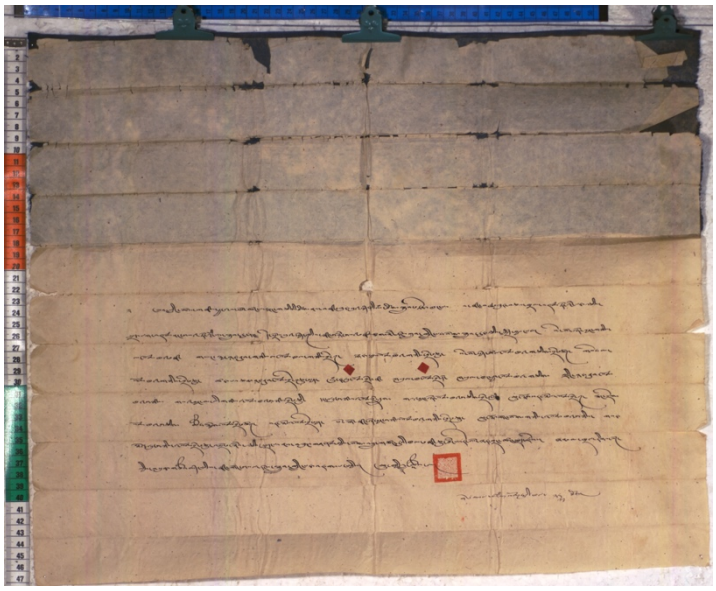


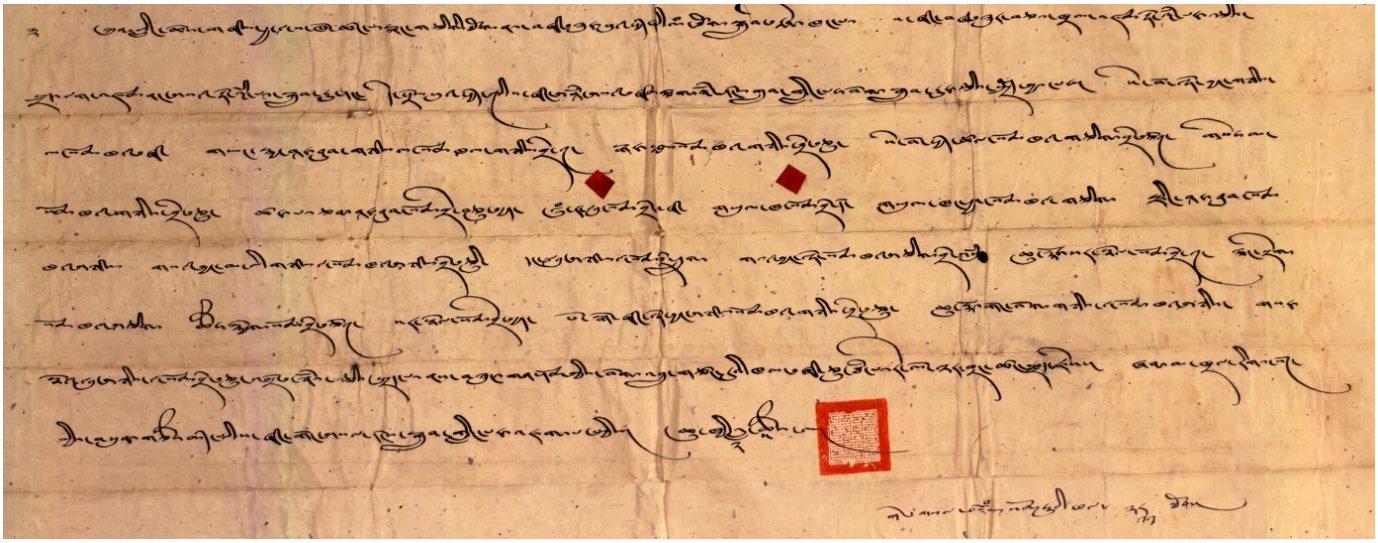
2.4 x 2.4 (1.7 x 1.7) cm

The impression can be dated 1802 (*chu khyi*)[305] and attributed to the Eighth rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa'i mgon po (1760–1810), who functioned as regent from 1789 to 1790 and 1791 to 1810.

(1) *Z rje drung*
(2) *ha'u thug*
(3) *thus {thu'i} tham*
(4) *ga rgyal lo/*

"Seal of the *rje drung ho thog thu*. Victory!"

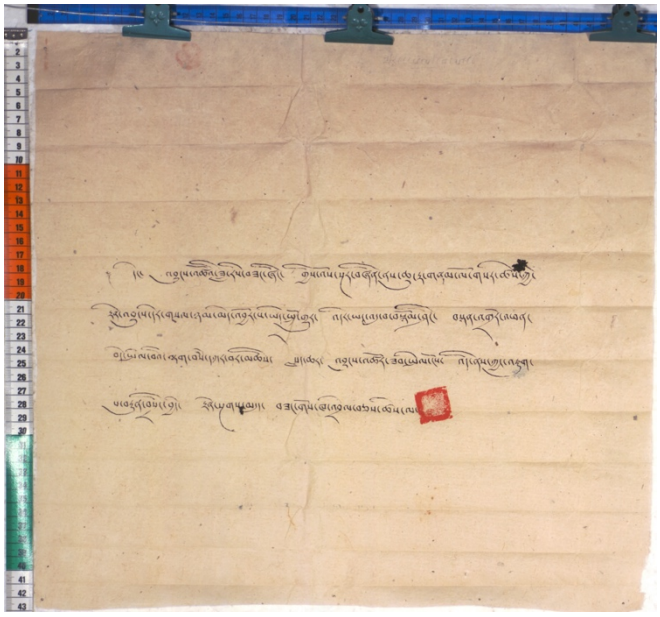




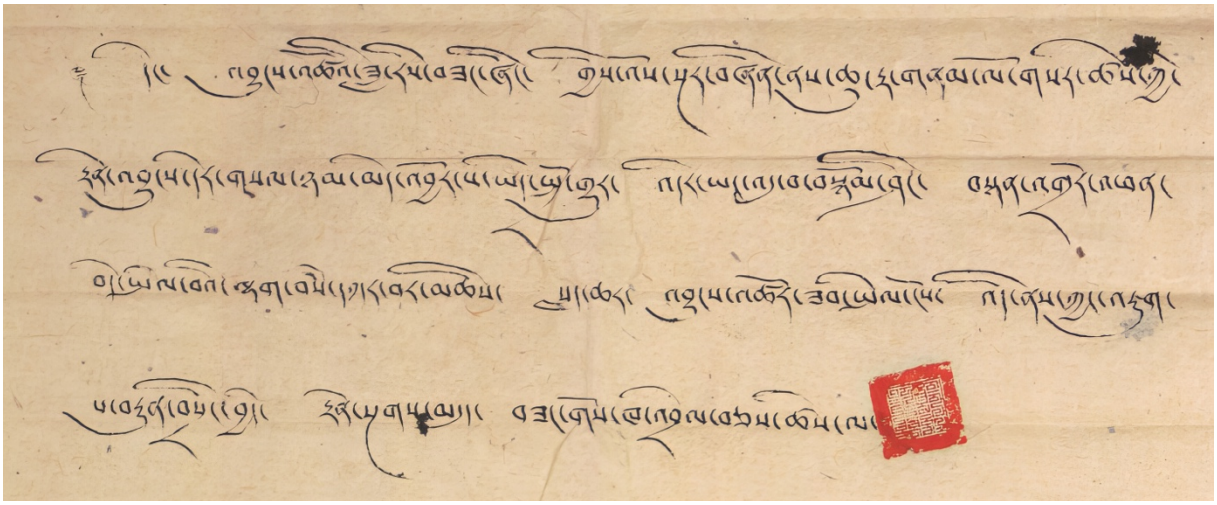
[305] KDL: 012 2-1/#/112/3/4 (ID 2295). The dating 1732 given by the Tibetan Archives and the attribution of the document to Pho lha nas is not correct. The year in which the document was issued was mistakenly read in the archive as *chu byi* instead of *chu khyi*.

Seal impression from 1822 (*chu rta gnam lo gsar*)[306]

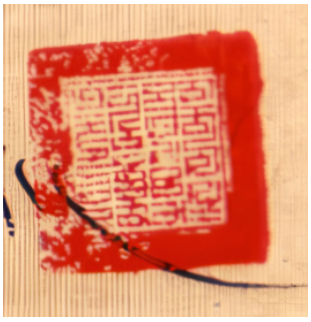
2.4 x 2.4 (1.7 x 1.7) cm



The impression can be attributed to the Ninth rTa tshag *rje drung rin po che* Ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1811–1848), who never acted as regent.



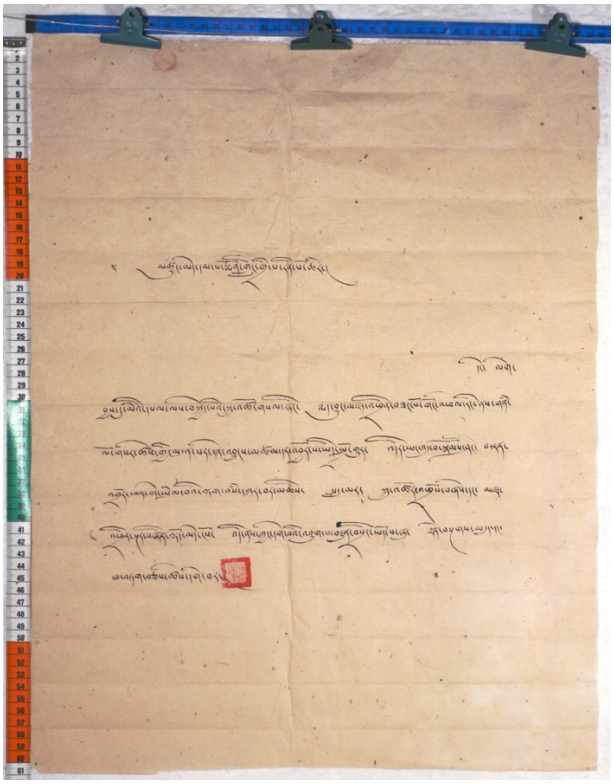
Undated seal impression[307]

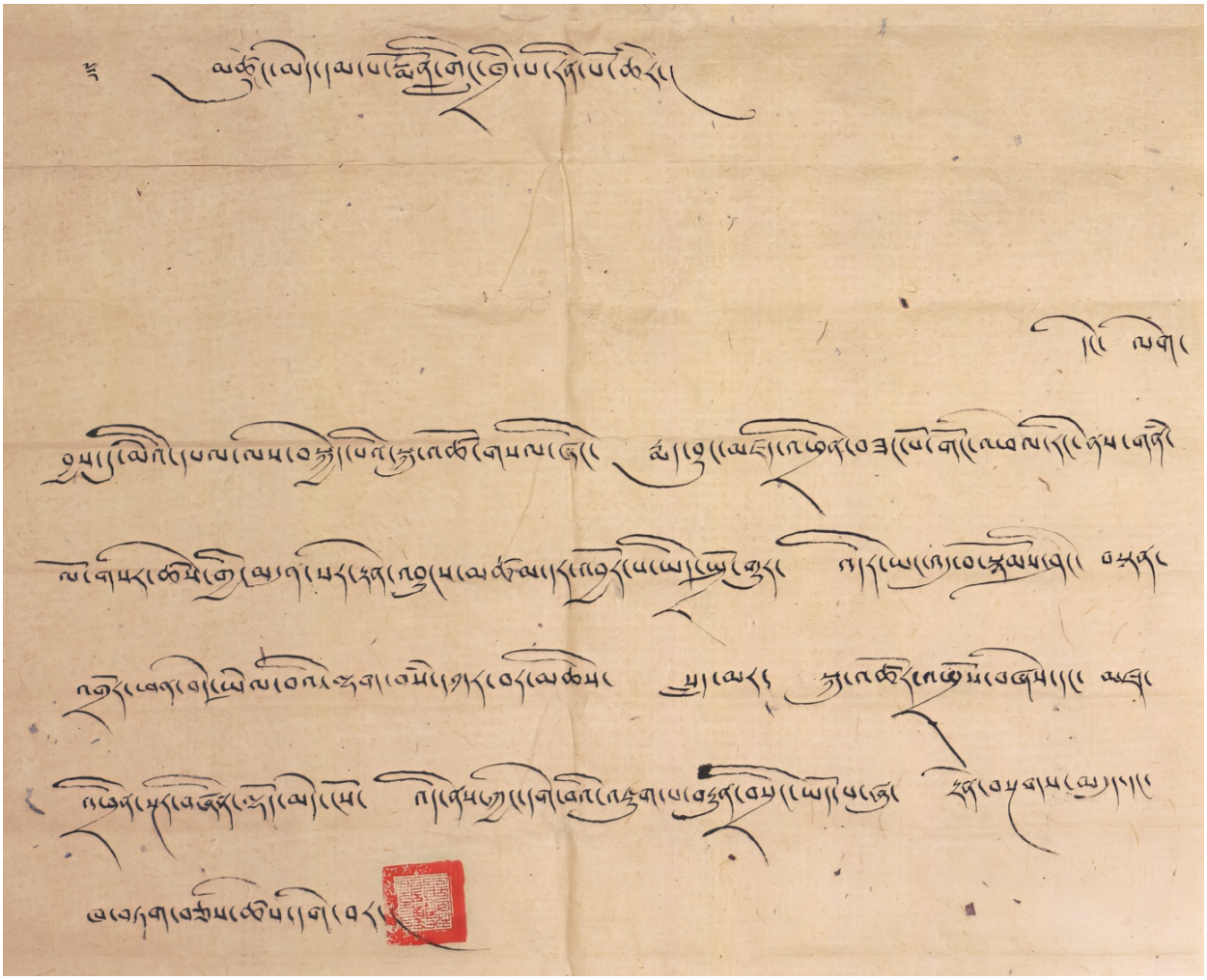


2.4 x 2.4 (1.7 x 1.7) cm

[306] KDL: 012 1-2/#/28/5/4 (ID 470).

[307] KDL: 012 1-2/#/28/4/4 (ID 469).





SEAL 82

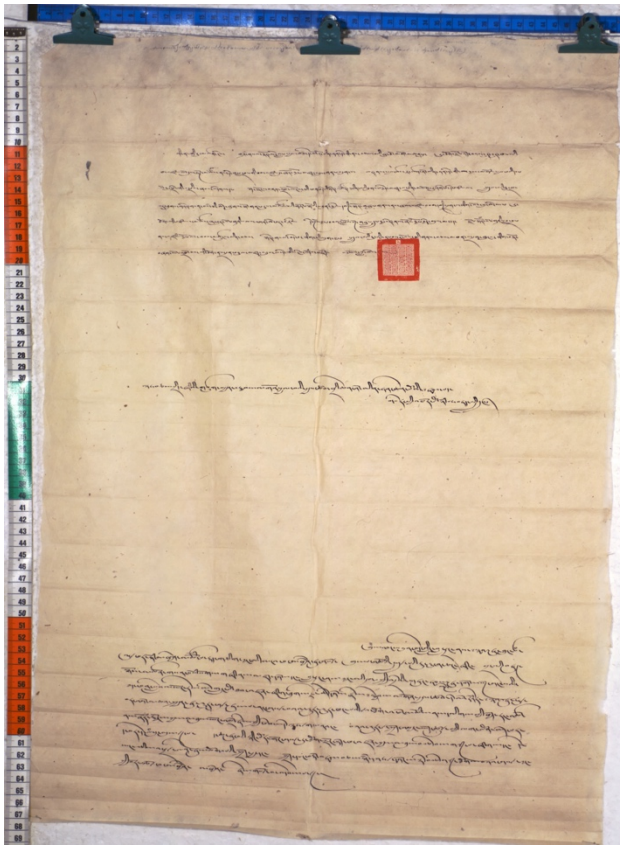
Seal of the second Tshe smon gling regent Ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho (1792–1855, r. 1819–1844).

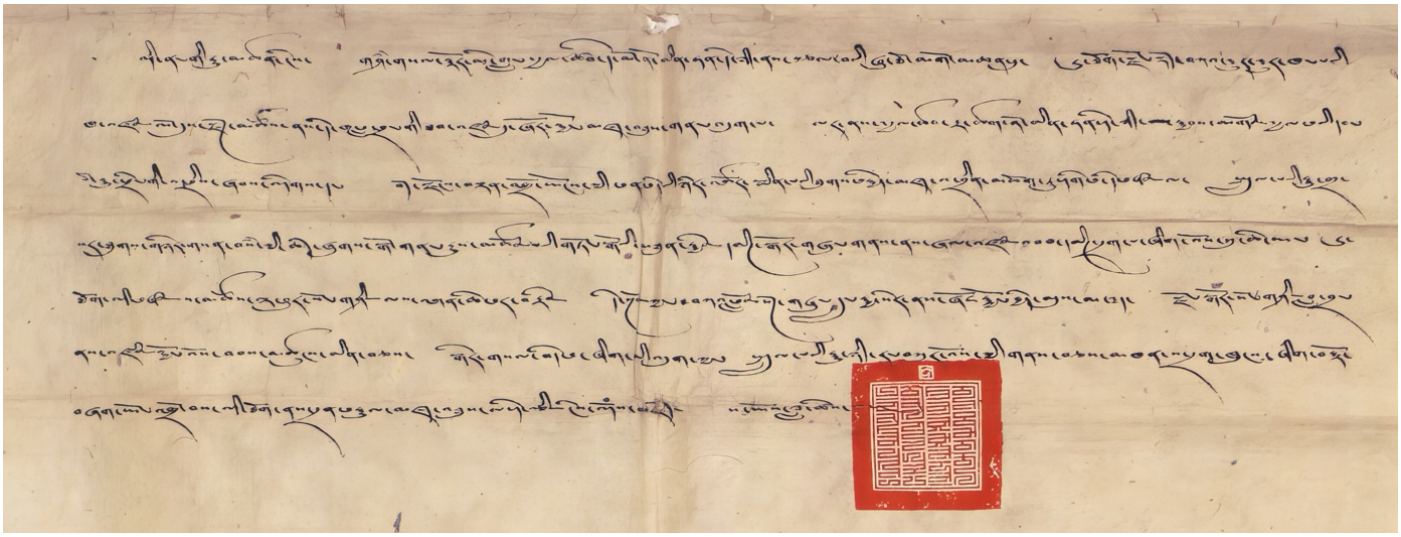
Impression from 1819 (*sa yos*)[308]

3.5 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

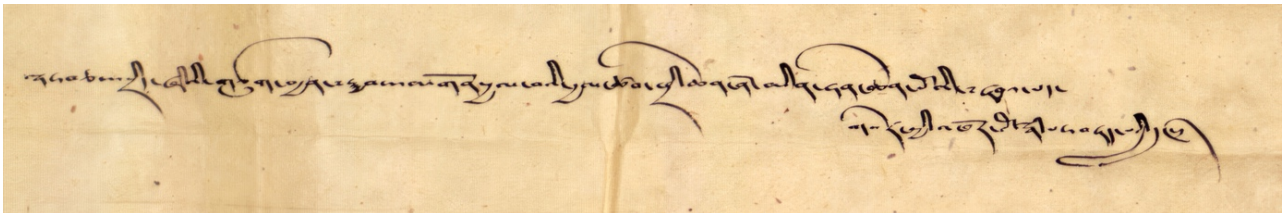
(1) *Z bstan pa´i P*
(2) *gsal byed er P*
(3) *te ne no mon han/*
(4) *gyi tham ga rgyal*

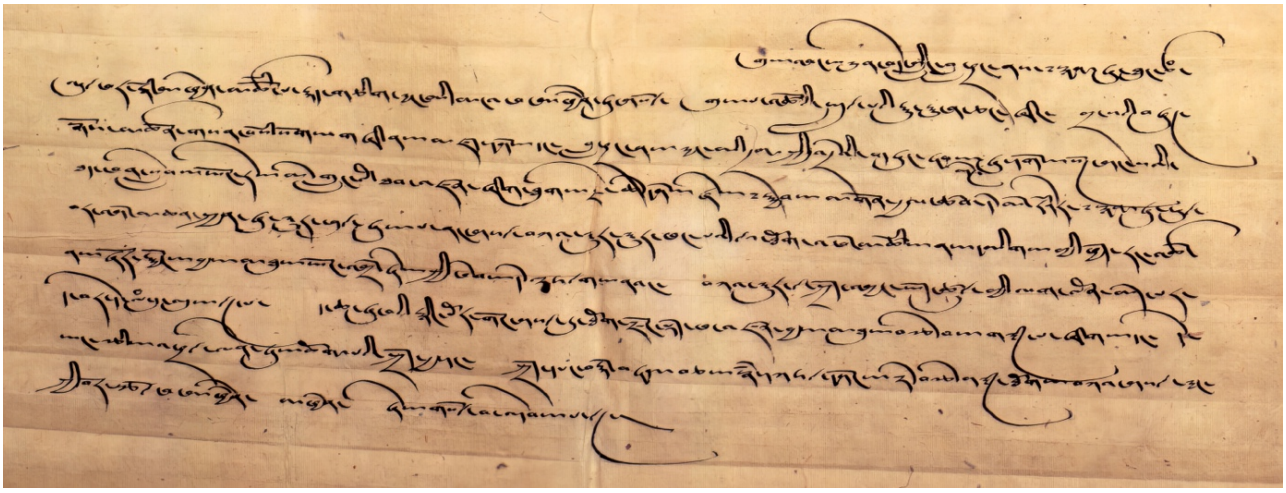
"Seal of *erdeni nomun han*, expounder of the (Buddhist) teachings. Victory!"





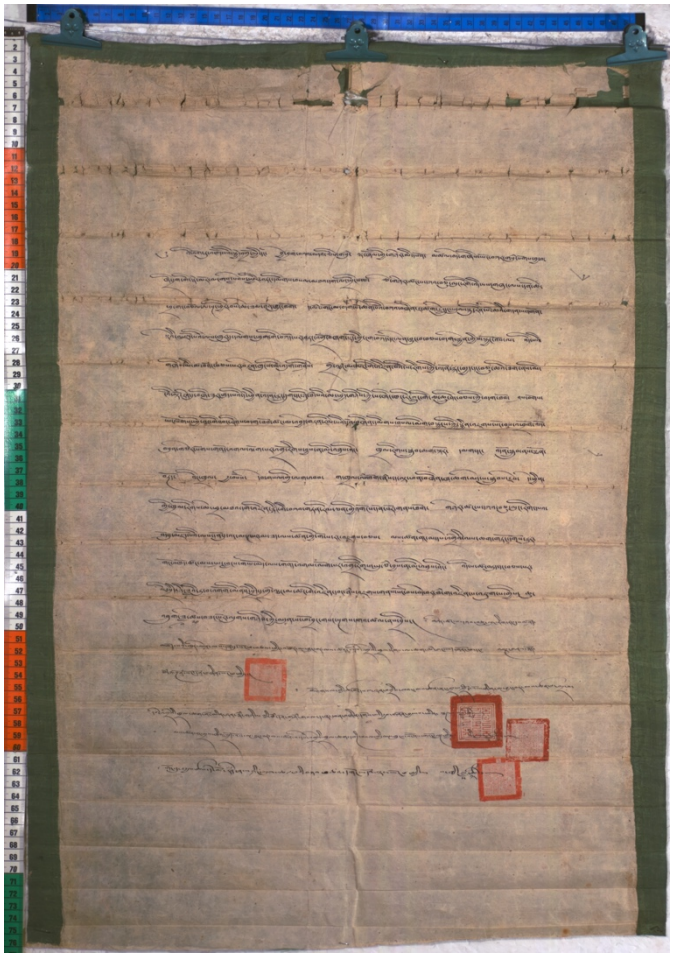
[308] KDL: 012 1-3/#/7/6/4 (ID 897).



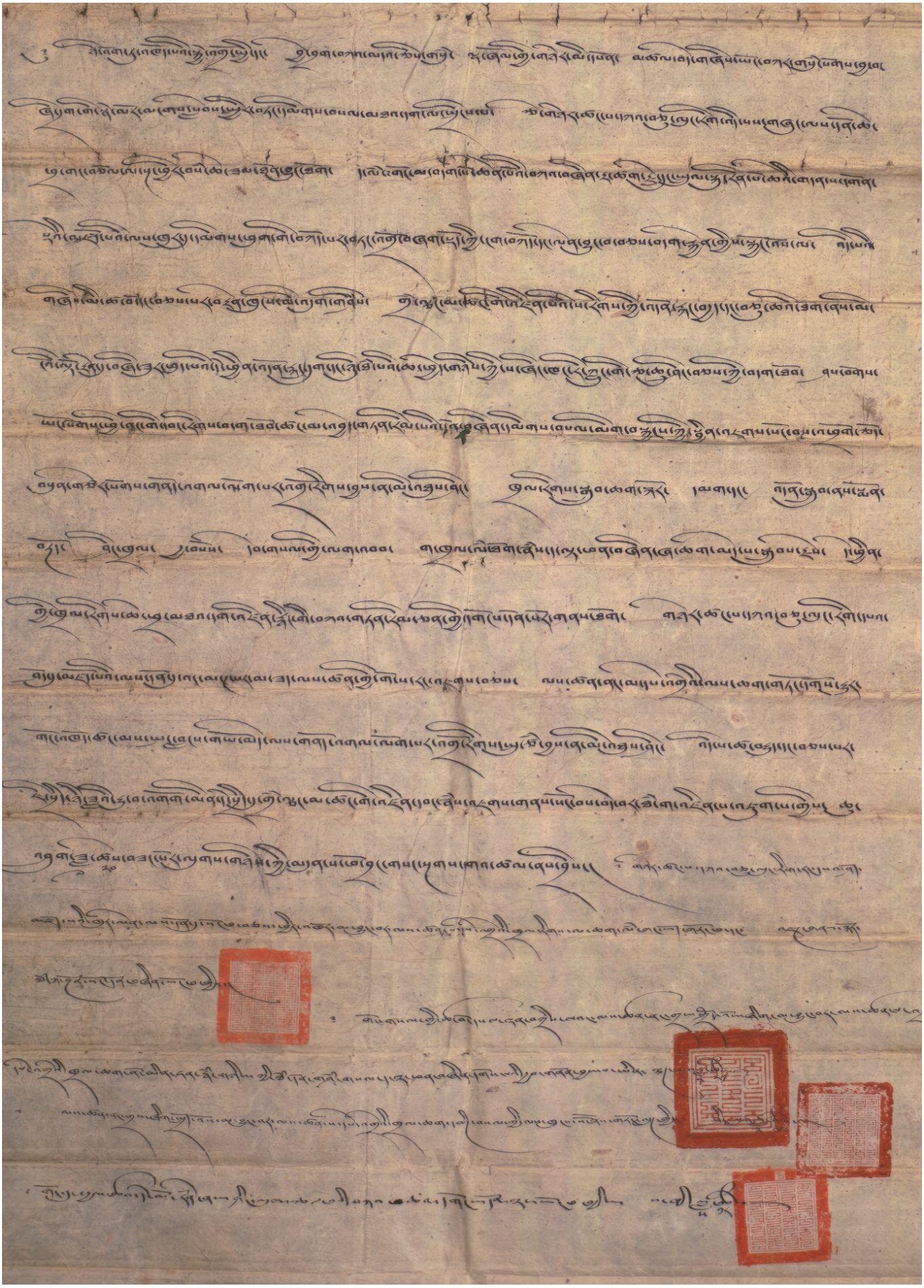


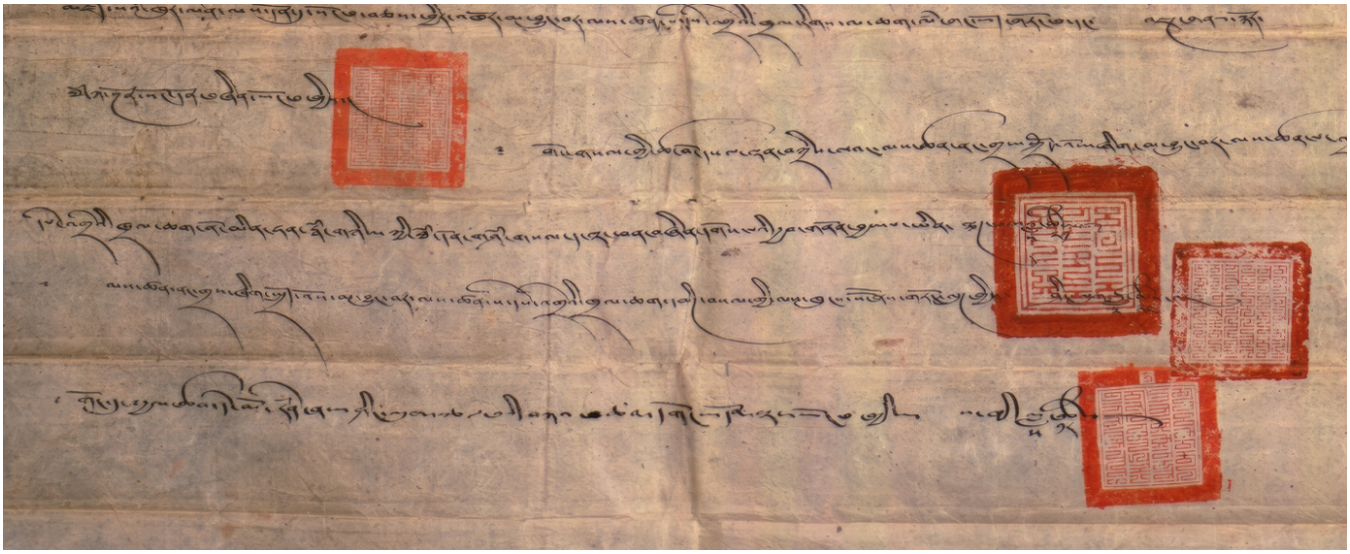
Impression from 1838 (*sa khyi*)[309]

3.5 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm



[309] KDL: 012 2-1/#/16/8/4 (ID 1200).

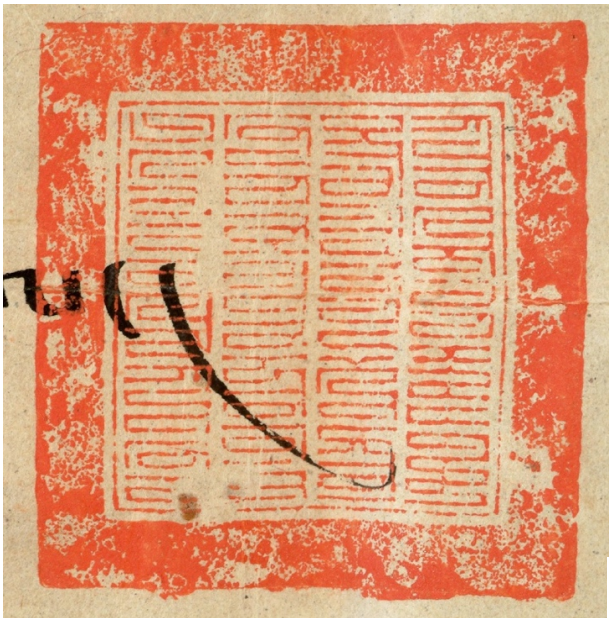




According to the *Long ba’i dmigs bu*, the second Tshe smon gling regent used the same seal as the first Tshe smon gling regent but added the letter *dza* to distinguish it.[310] Actually, the letter depicted in the upper frame of the seal stamp is the Vartu letter *ja*. An impression of the first Tshe smon gling regent’s seal has not yet been found.

SEAL 83

Undated impression from a letter to Jang Bahadur Rana (1817-1877, r. 1845–1877), Prime Minister of Nepal[311]

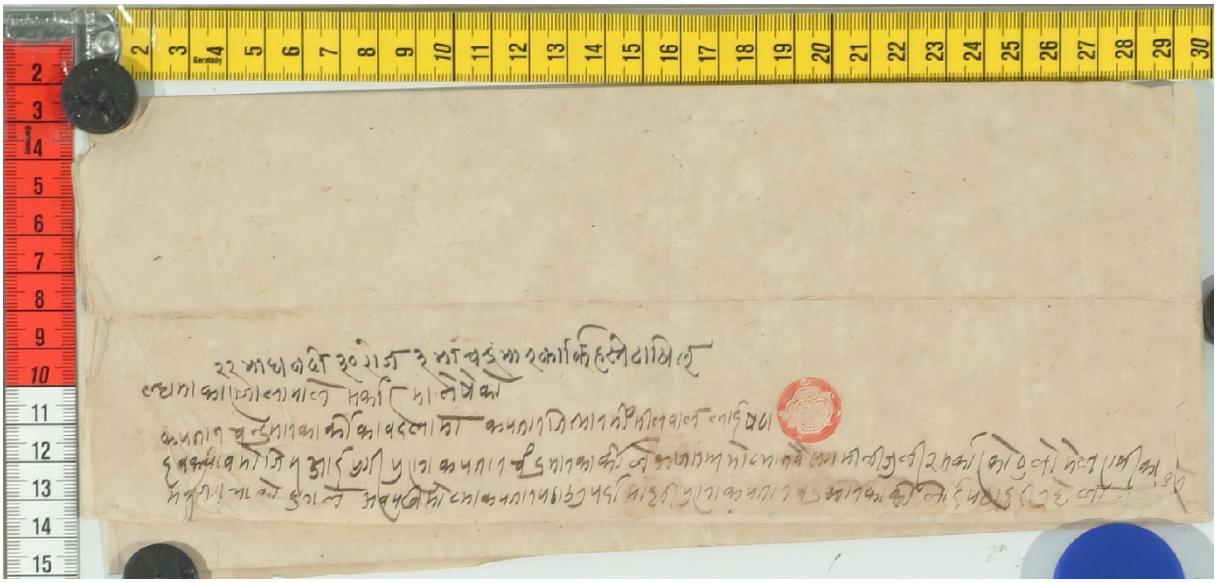


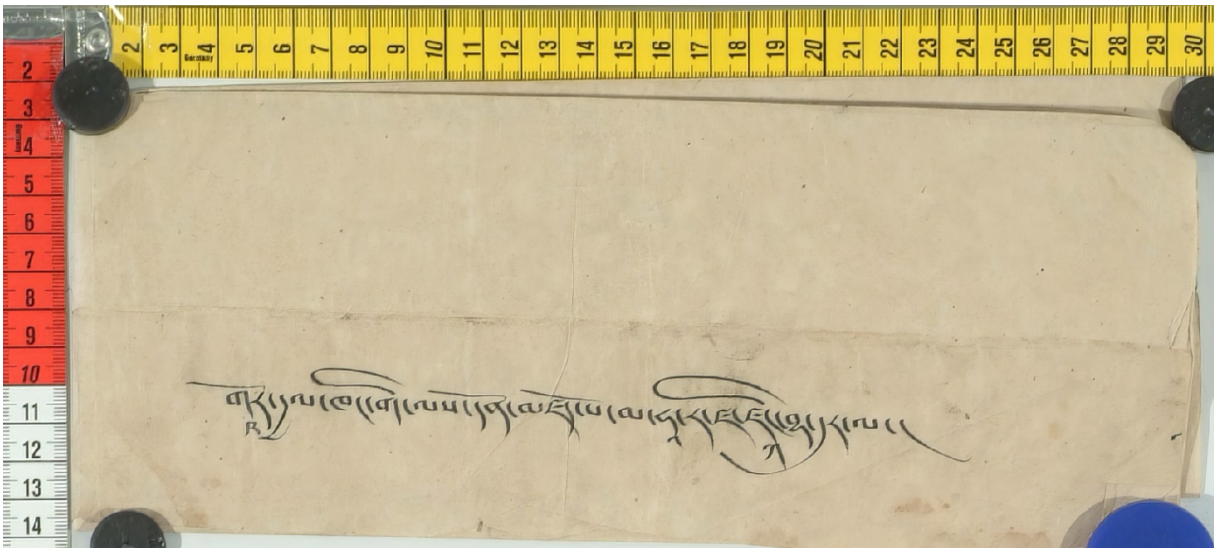
(1) *Z ’phrin las kyi khri*
(2) *khyab no min han gyi*
(3) *tham ka phan bde’i don*
(4) *kun ’grubar P P P*

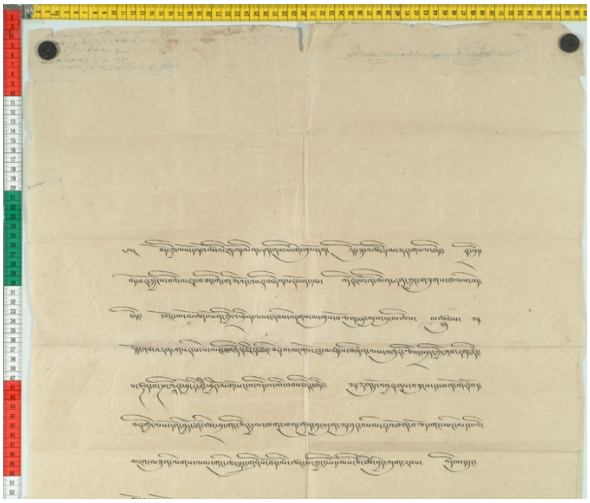
“Seal of *’phrin las kyi khri khyab no min han*, accomplishing the goal of happiness and well-being”

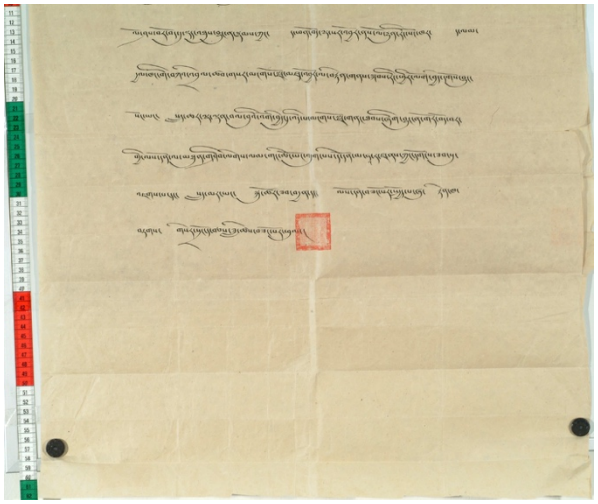
3.7 x 3.8 (2.8 x 2.9) cm

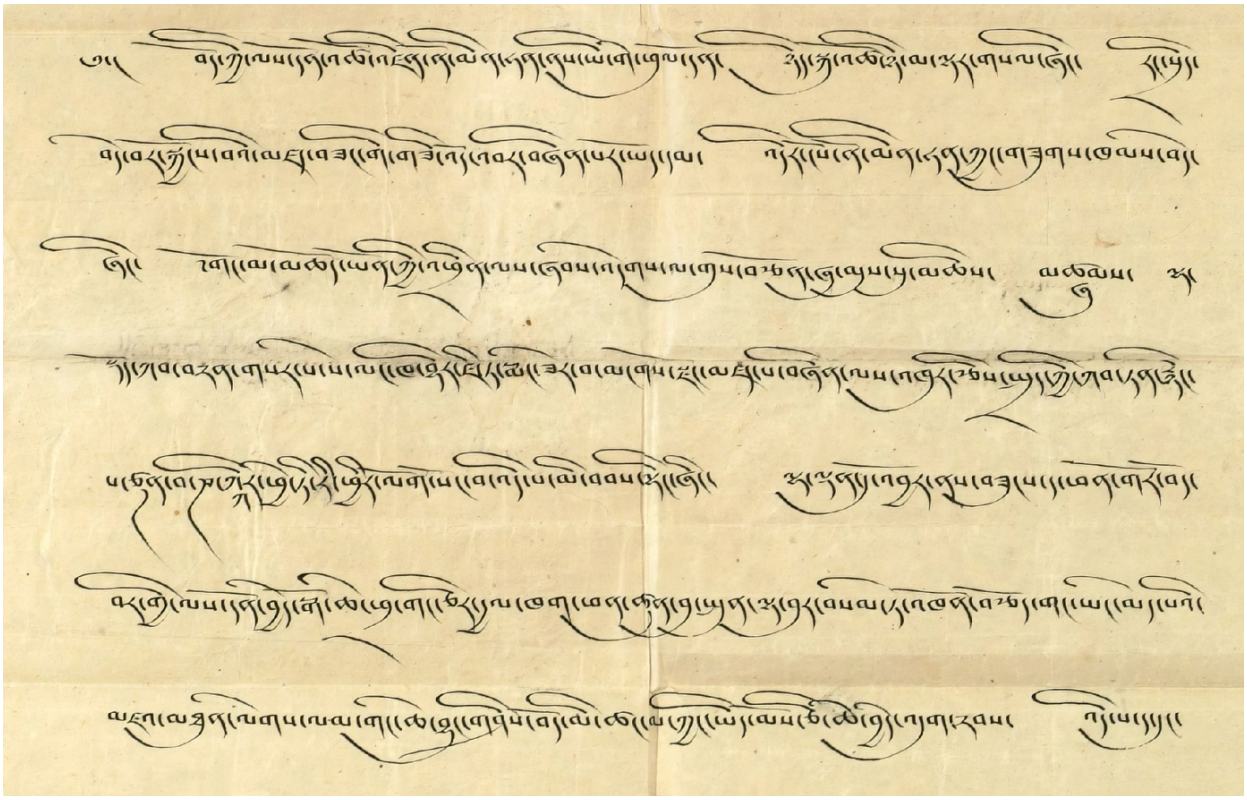
[310] *Long ba’i dmigs bu* 8v–9r, 26v; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 24–25, 65. See also Schuh 1981, 128. The deciphering of the second column given in Schuh 2018, 227, 228, 230, 233–235, 237–240, is faulty.
[311] KHD: 0422_KHD_S80.

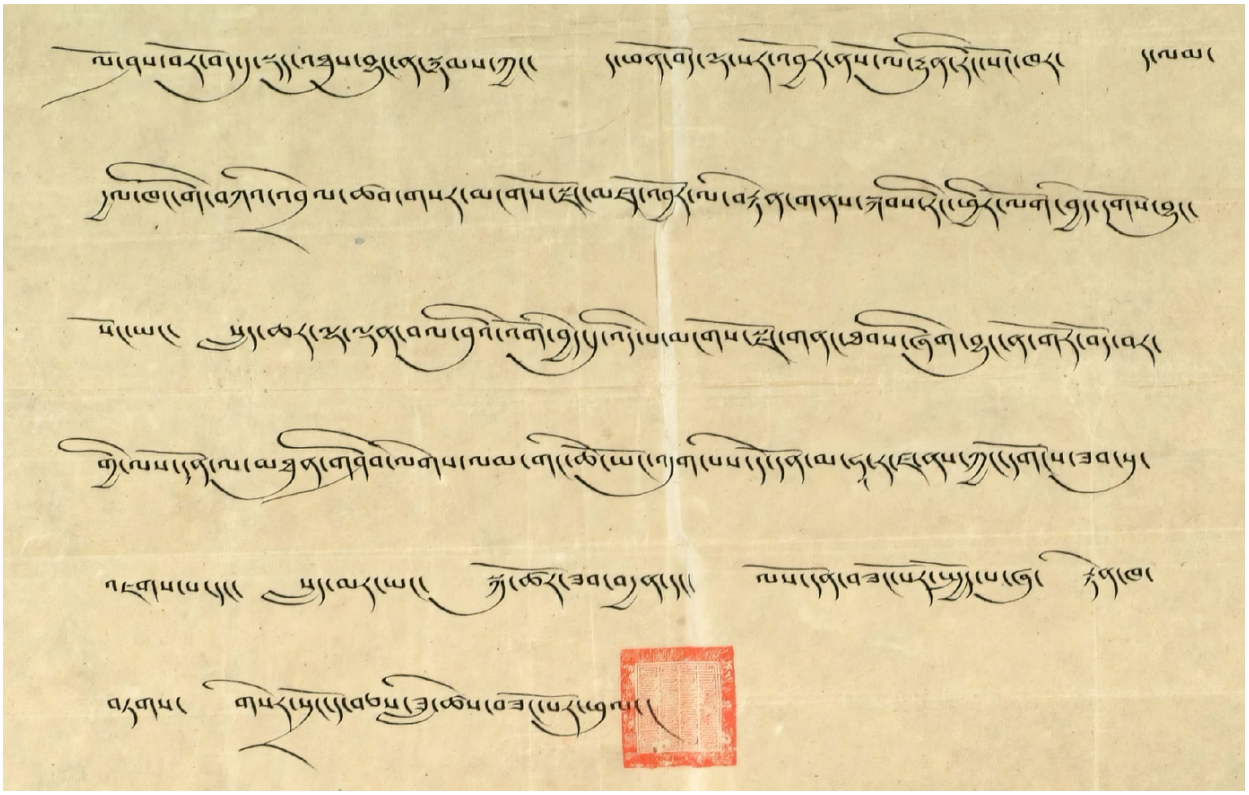












As well known, bShad sgra ba dBang phyug rgyal po (1795–1864, r. 1862–1864) had already been in correspondence with Jang Bahadur Rana during and after his time as cabinet minister.[312] On the

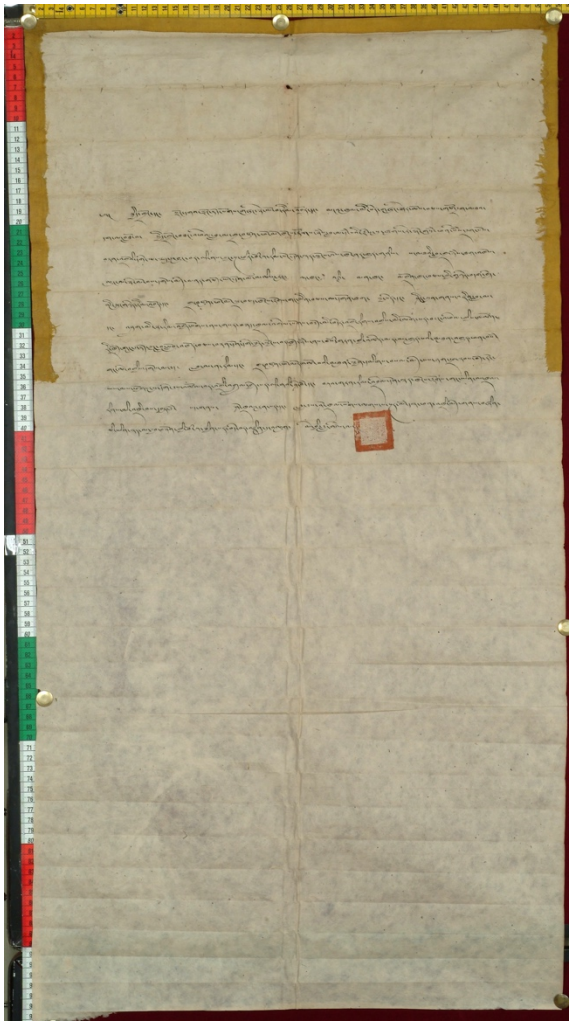
[312] Shakabpa 2010, vol. II, 601–602.

occasion of his appointment as regent in 1862, he had received the title *nomun han* (*no min han*).[313] It seems therefore reasonable to attribute the seal to the regent and to date the seal impression to his period of office. However, according to the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, bShad sgra ba dBang phyug rgyal po did not have his own official seal during his reign but used instead the seal of the Dalai Lama and the seal of the Council of Ministers.[314] Therefore, the assignment of this seal remains unclear for the time being. See also SEAL 77.

SEAL 84

Seal impression of the second rTa tshag regent Ngag dbang dpal ldan chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1850–1886, r. 1875–1886) from 1876 (*me byi*)[315]

3.4 x 3.4 (2.6 x 2.6) cm



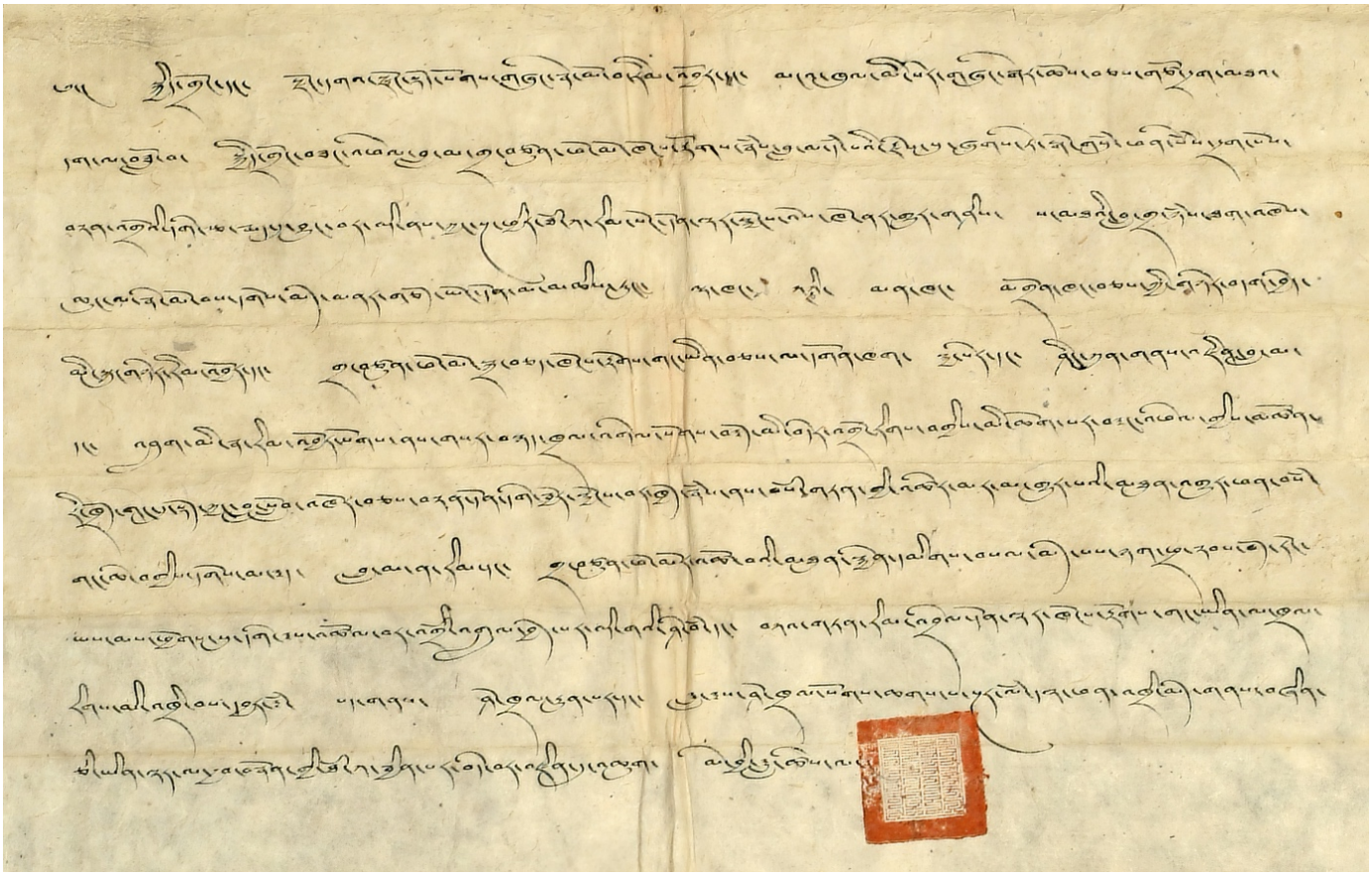
(1) *Z bstan pa rgyas*
(2) *byed da' la'i no P*
(3) *mon han gyi tham*
(4) *ga rnam kun rgyalo*

"Seal of the *dalai nomun han*, who spreads the doctrine. Victorious at all times."

[313] Shakabpa 2010, vol. II, 605.

[314] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 9v–10r; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 28.

[315] LTWA: 0809_LTWA_1.



SEAL 85

Seal impressions of a *mda' dpon*[316]

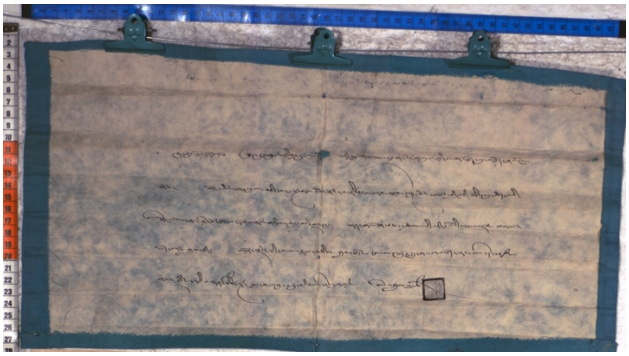
(1) *phyogs*
(2) *las rnam par P*
(3) *rgyal ba'i*
(4) *dpal rtags*

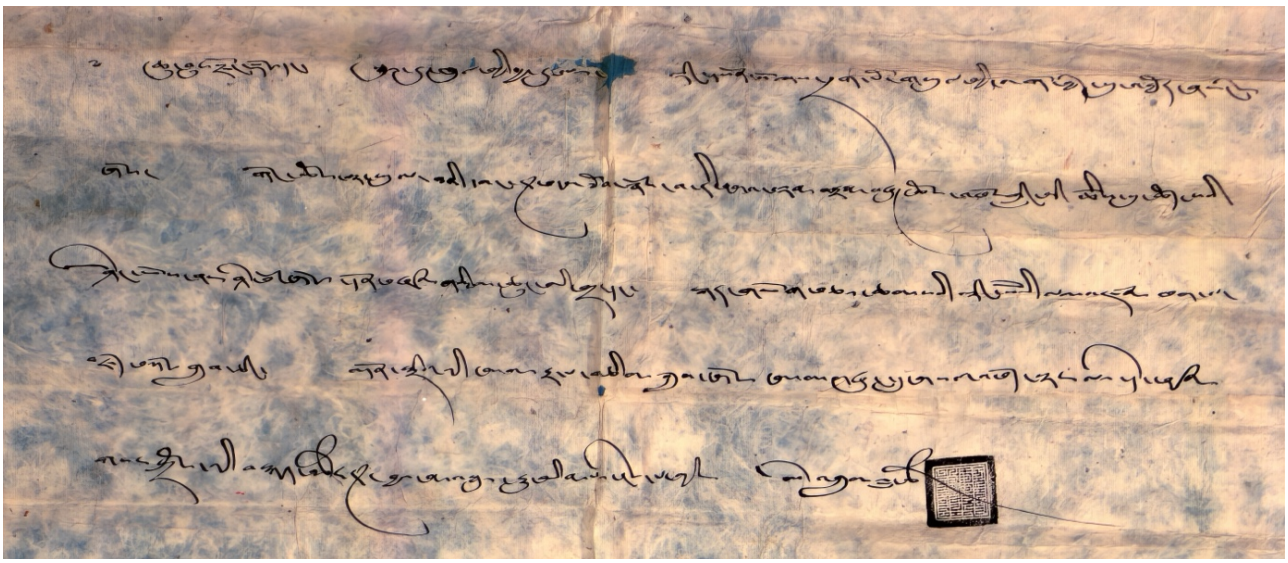
"Glorious seal of the complete victory."

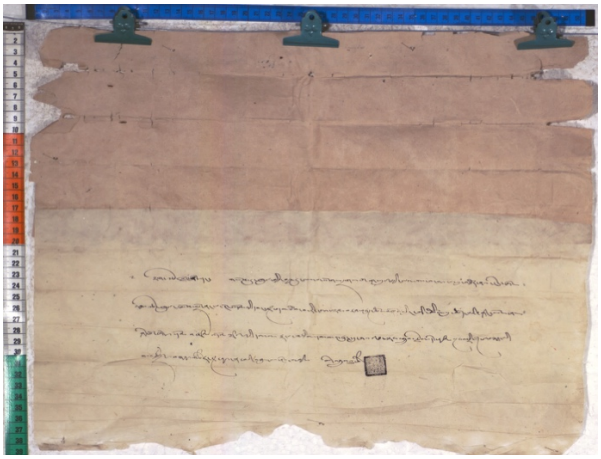
1.9 x 1.9 (1.5 x 1.5) cm and 1.9 x 1.8 (1.5 x 1.5) cm

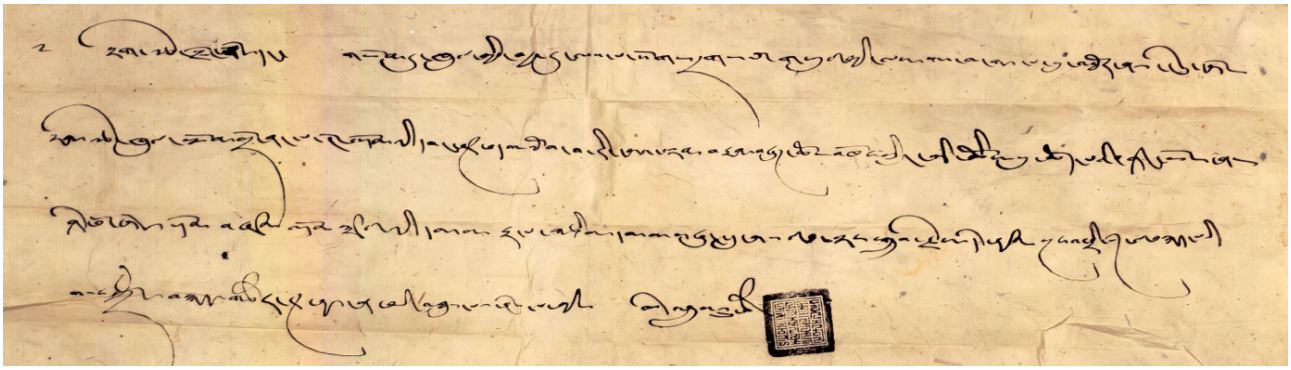
Both impressions have been dated by the Tibetan Archives 1856 (*me 'brug*). The one on the left was attributed by the archives to the *dmag spyi khang*, which however was not founded until 1913 (see seal SEAL 79). The one on the right is from a document that identifies itself as a *mda' dam bka' shog*, meaning a written directive on which the seal of the general (*mda' dpon*) has been affixed.

[316] KDL: 012 2-1/#/70/7/4 (ID 1838); KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/1/4 (ID 1115).









4.3.4 Five-column Seal Inscriptions

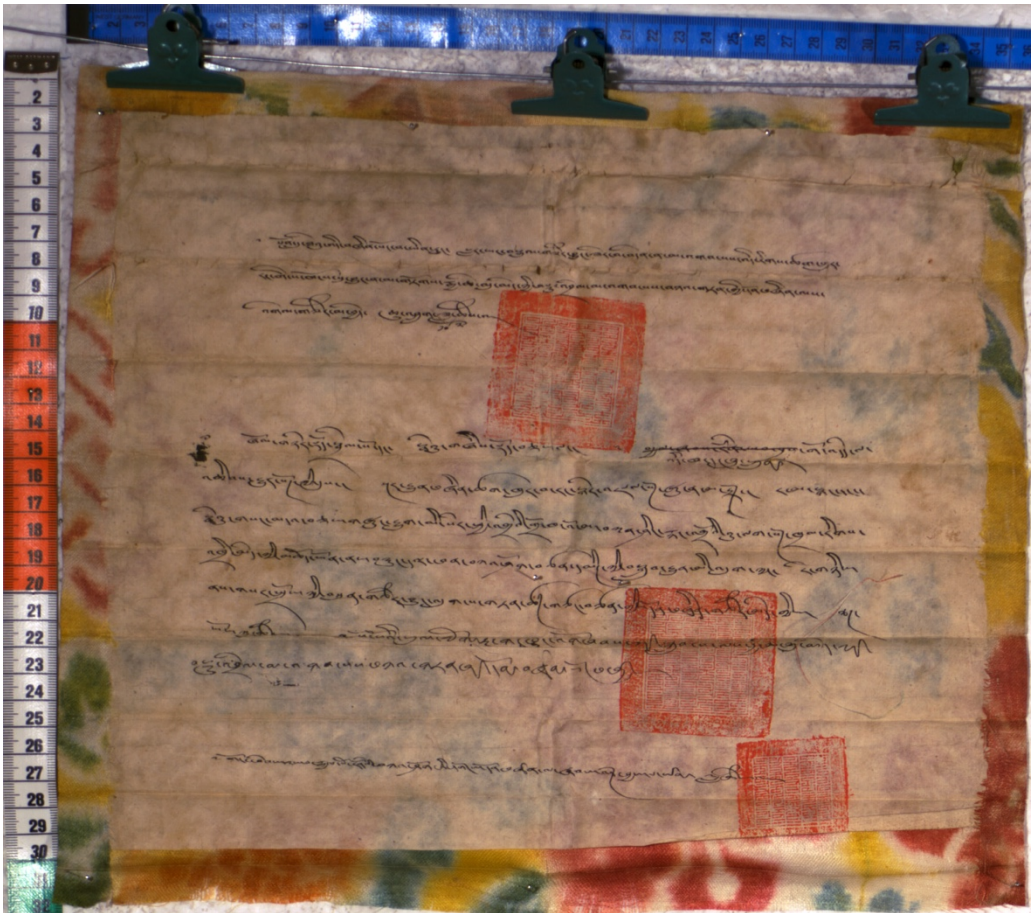
SEAL 86

Seal impression of dGa' ldan bstan skyong dKon mchog tshe dbang[317]

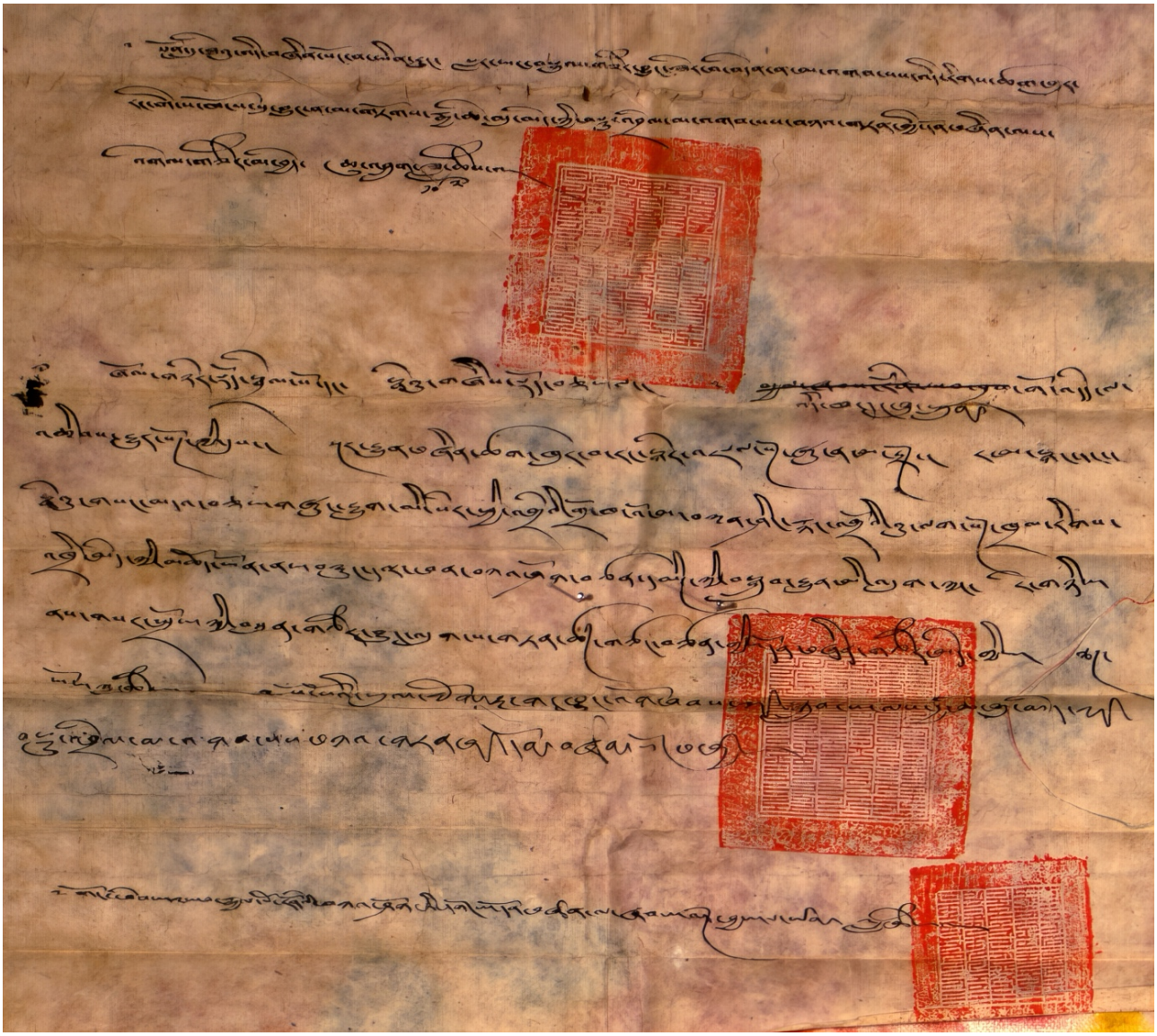
4.1 x ? (2.9 x 2.7) cm

(1) *Z gnam sa'i dbang*
(2) *phyug dga' ldan//*
(3) *bstan skyongs {skyong}/*
(4) *dkon chog {mchog}* tshe *dbang*
(5) *gyi tham kha bkra shis*

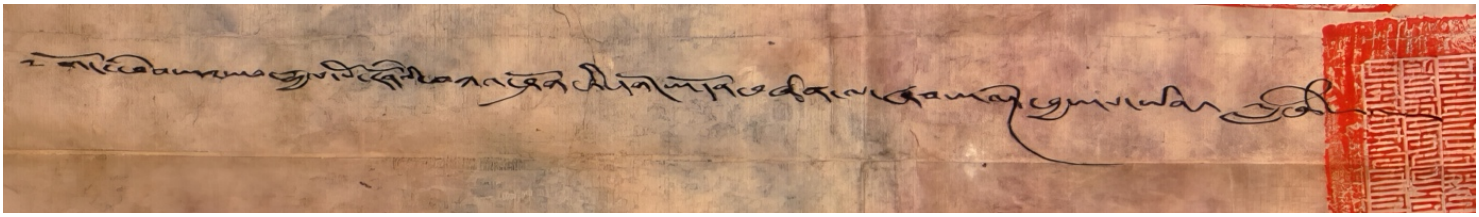
"Seal of dGa' ldan bstan skyong dKon mchog tshe dbang, lord of heaven and earth. May there be auspiciousness!"



[317] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/8/4 (ID 1721).



The seal impression appears at the end of an undated confirmation note below a document issued by lHa bzang Khan in 1711 (*lcags yos*) and confirmed again by himself in 1712 (*chu 'brug*). The confirmation expressly refers to the "Decree of the Father and Precious King" (*yab rgyal po rin po che'i bka' shog*), which suggests that the issuer of the confirmation was a son of lHa bzang Khan.



However, no son of lHa bzang Khan with the name or alias dKon mchog tshe dbang is known to date. Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the Long ba'i dmigs bu presents a rough tracing and a transliteration of the seal impression.[318] According to the explanation added there,

[318] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 70–71.

the identity of the owner of the seal is unclear. Impressions of the seal would be known from the Fire Dog (*me khyi*) and the Iron Hare (*lcags yos*) year.

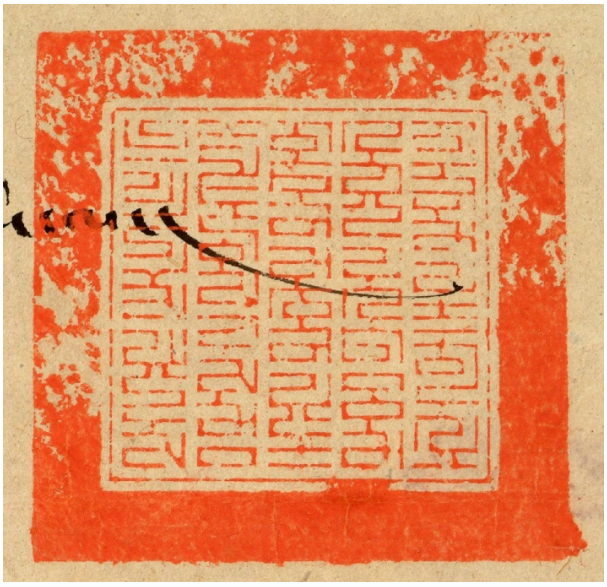
SEAL 48

See pp. 123—124.

SEAL 87

Two impressions of a seal of the first rTa tshag regent Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa’i mgon po (r. 1789–1790, 1791–1810)

Undated seal impression[319]

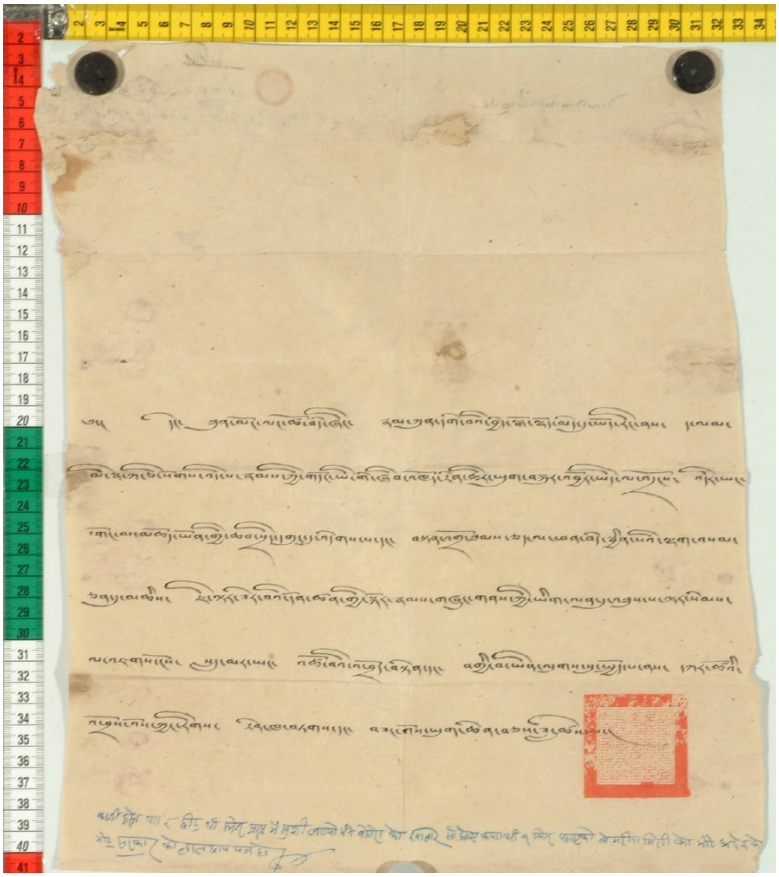


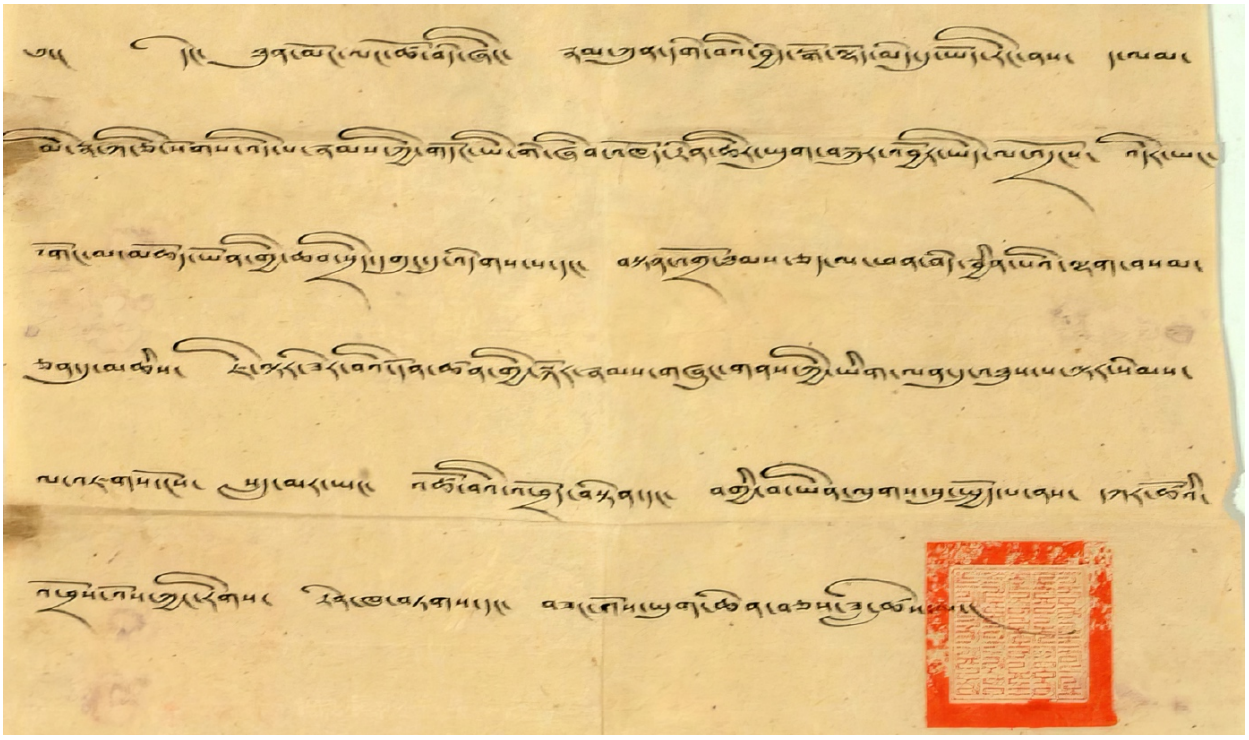
5.0 x 4.9 (3.6 x 3.6) cm

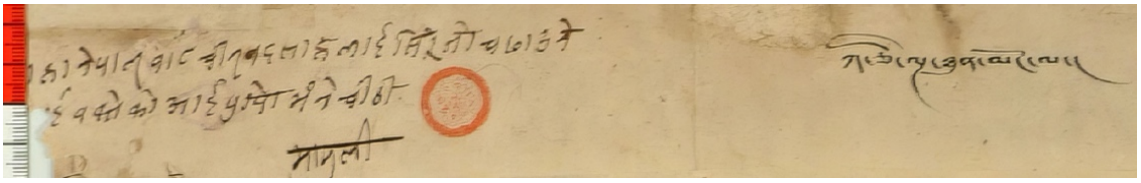
(1) *Z ye shes yongs*
(2) *rdzogs bsam P*
(3) *gtan mkhan por P*
(4) *’bod pa’i tham*
(6) *ga rnam par rgyalo*

“Seal of the one who is called Ye shes yongs rdzogs bsam gtan mkhan po. Complete victory.”

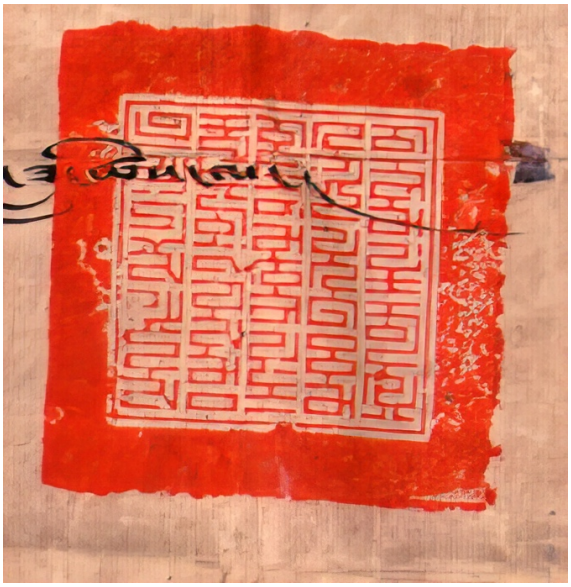
[319] KHD: 0391_KHD_S83.



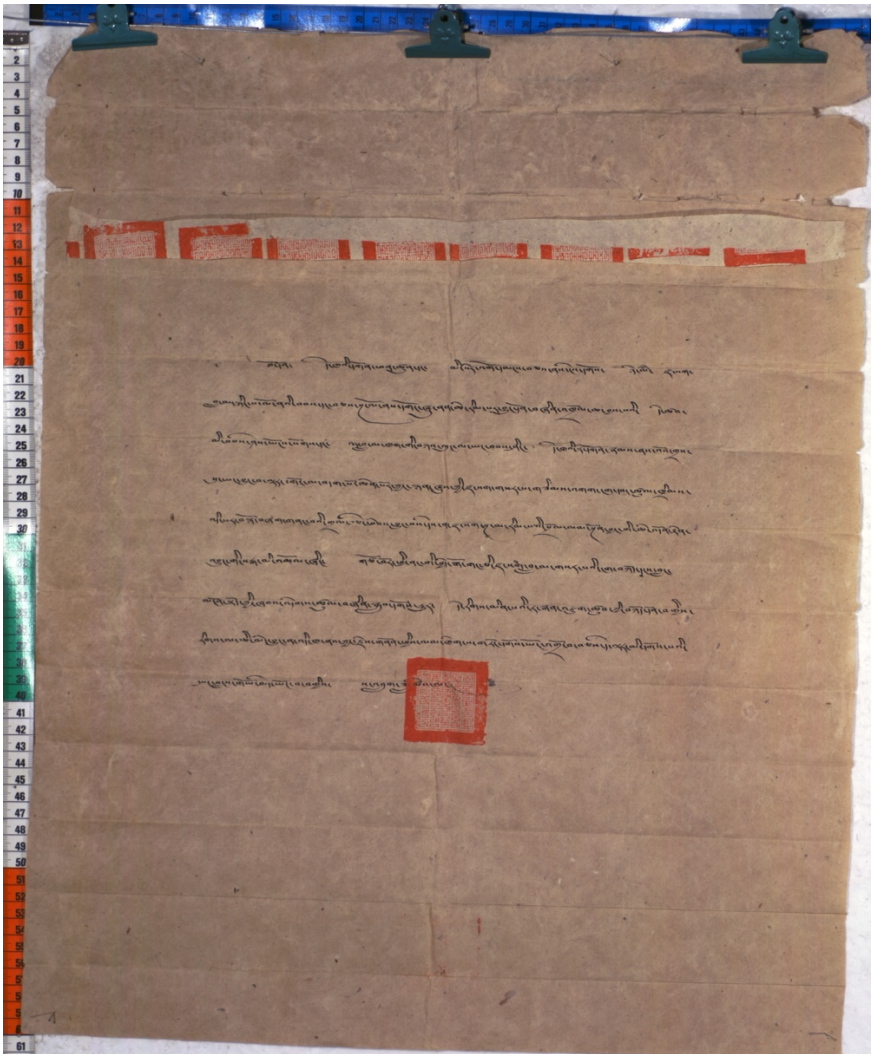




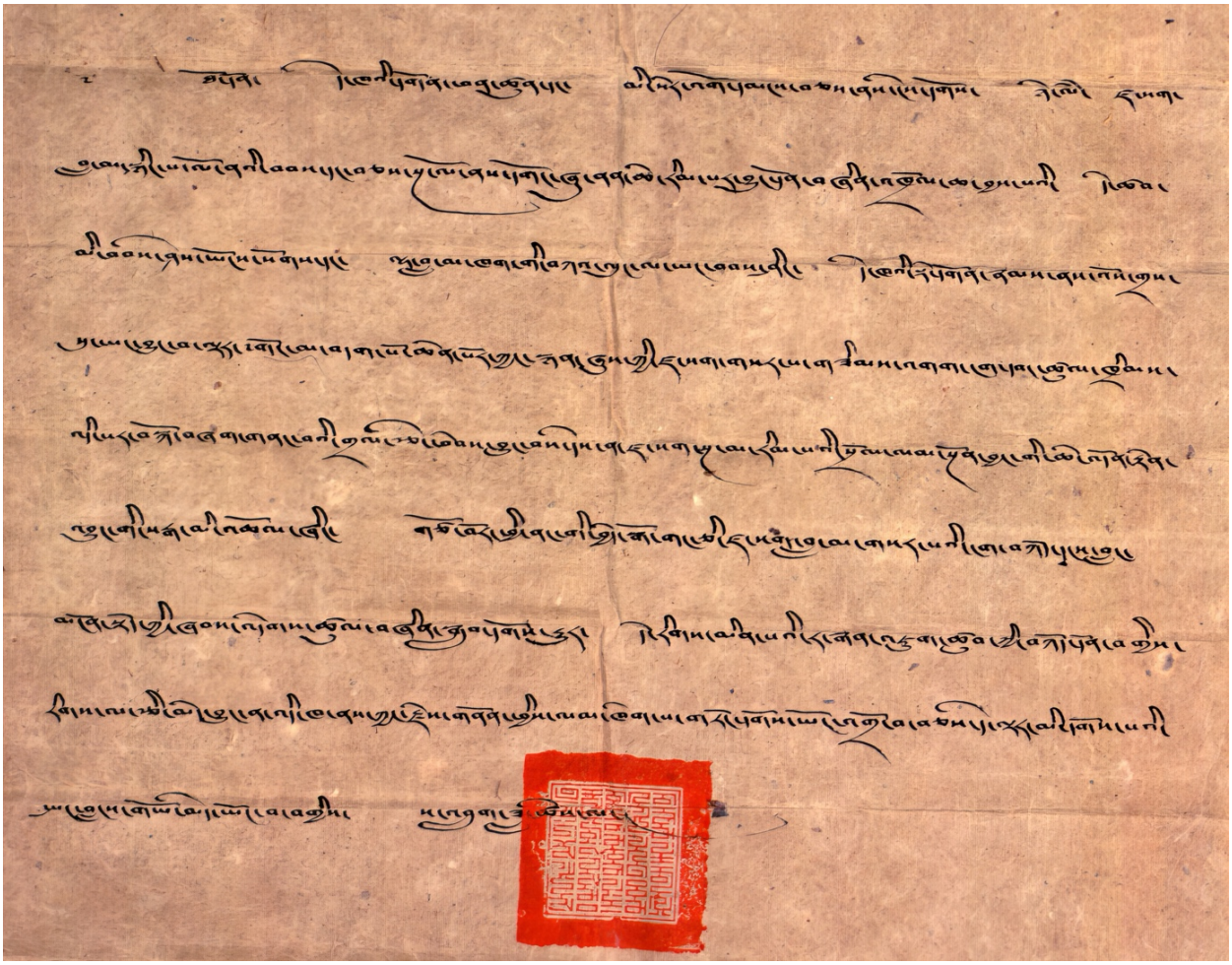
Seal impression from 1808 (*sa ’brug*)[320]



4.9 x 4.9 (3.5 x 3.5) cm



[320] KDL: 012 1-3/#/1/1/4 (ID 838).



SEAL 88

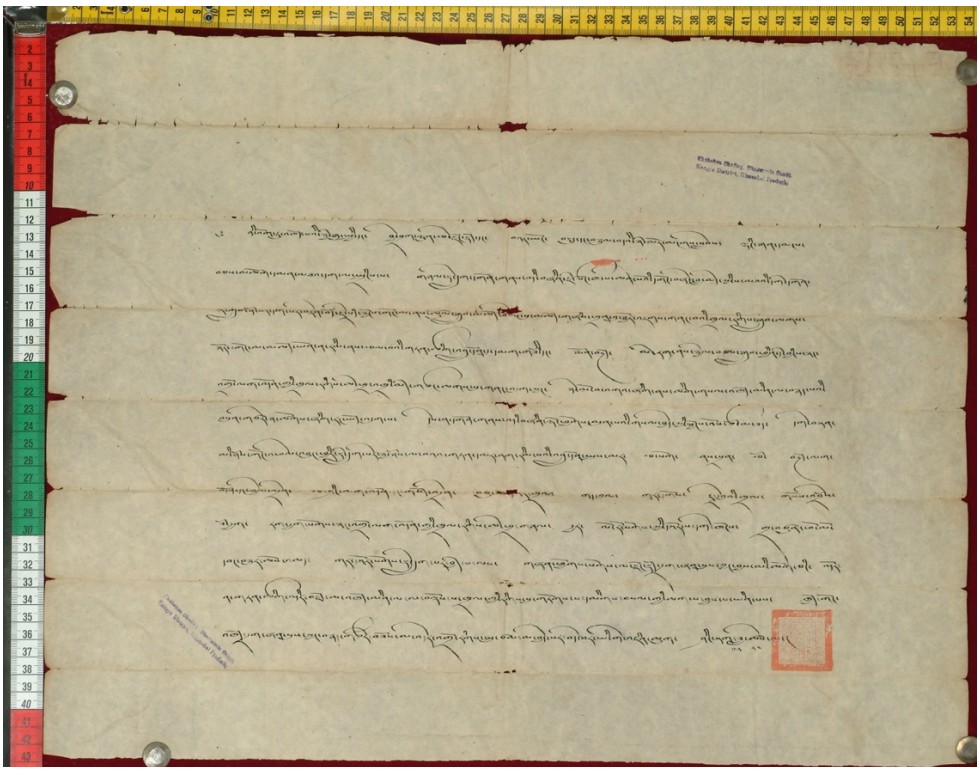
Seal impressions of the first Rwa sgreng regent Ngag dbang ye shes tshul khrims rgyal mtshan (1816–1863, r. 1845–1855, 1856–1862). The first one dates from 1855 (*shing stag*).[321]

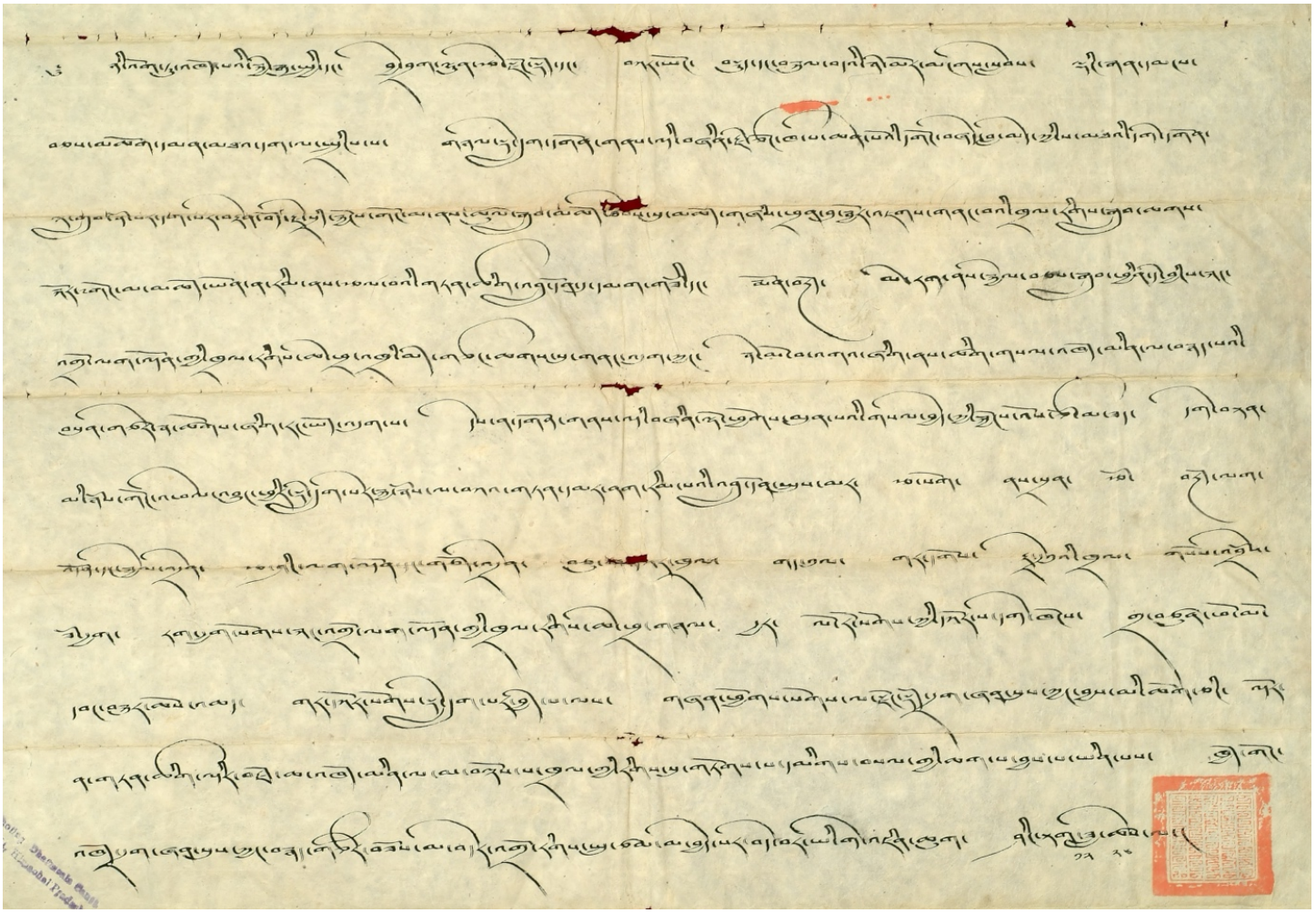
3.5 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

(1) *Z bkas bod kyi las P*
(2) *don khur 'dzin zhwa P*
(3) *ser bstan pa 'dzin*
(4) *byed er te ne no min*
(5) *han gyi tham ga rgyal*

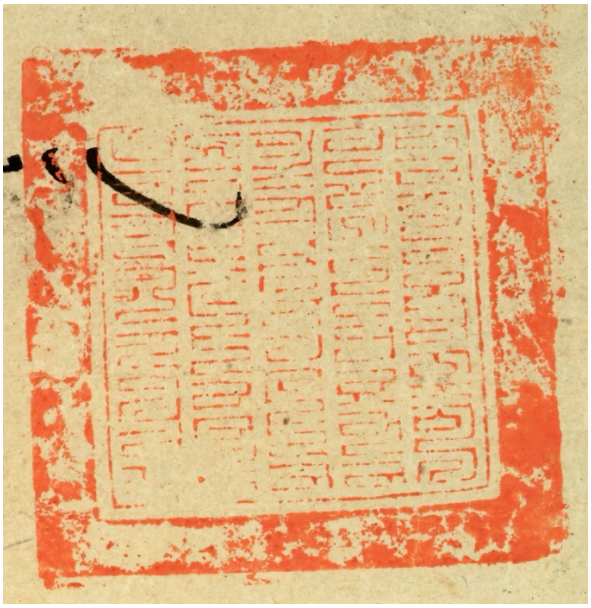
"Seal of *erdeni nomun han*, who bears the burden of (government) duties by order (of the emperor) and holds the teachings of the Yellow Hats. Victory!"

[321] LTWA: 0964_LTWA_176.

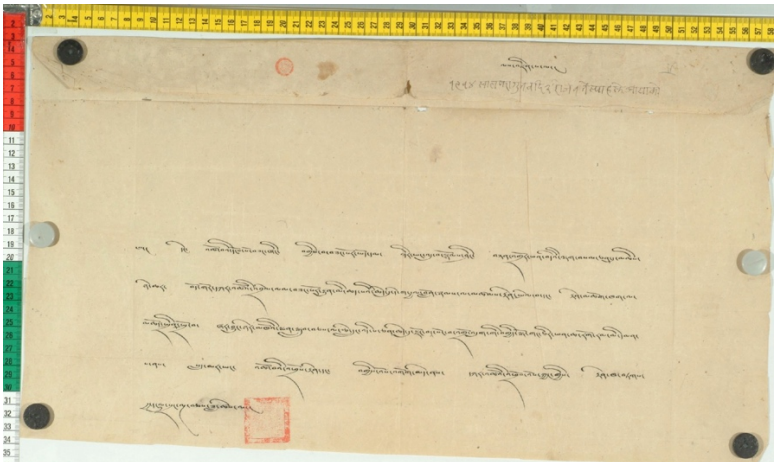


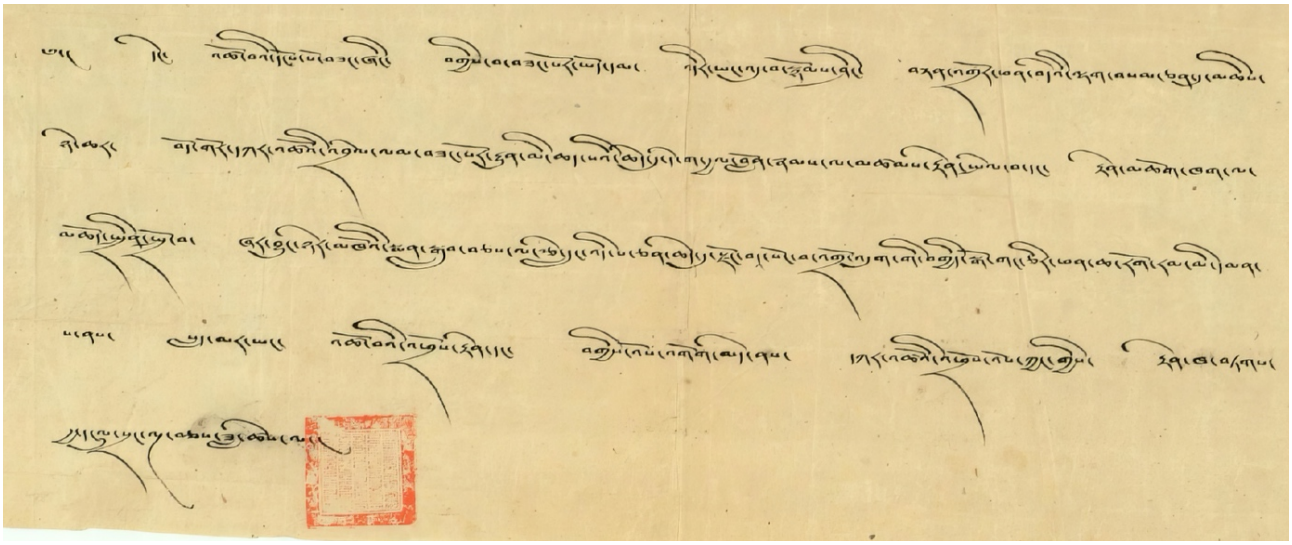


Seal impression from 1857[322]



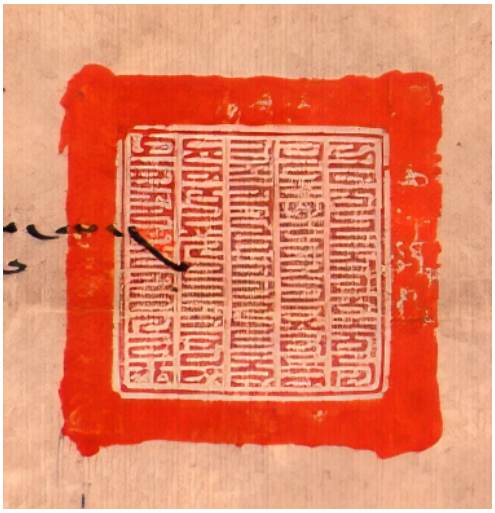
3.5 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm



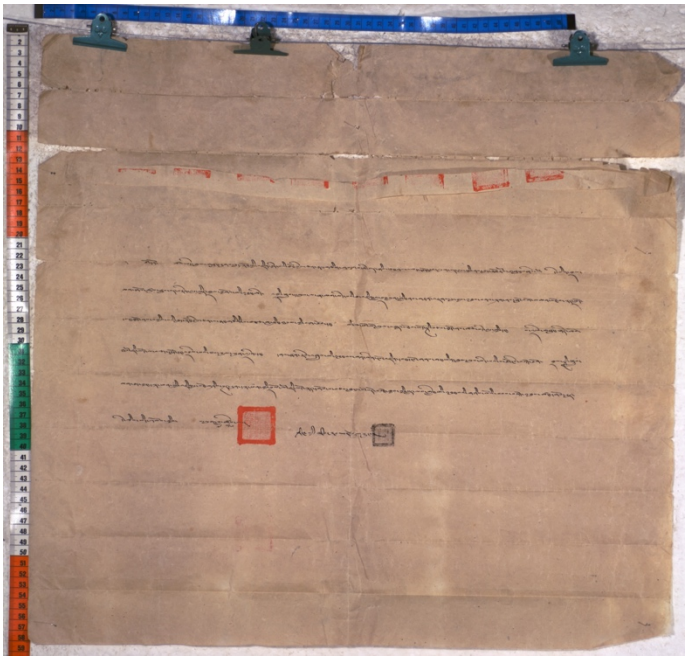


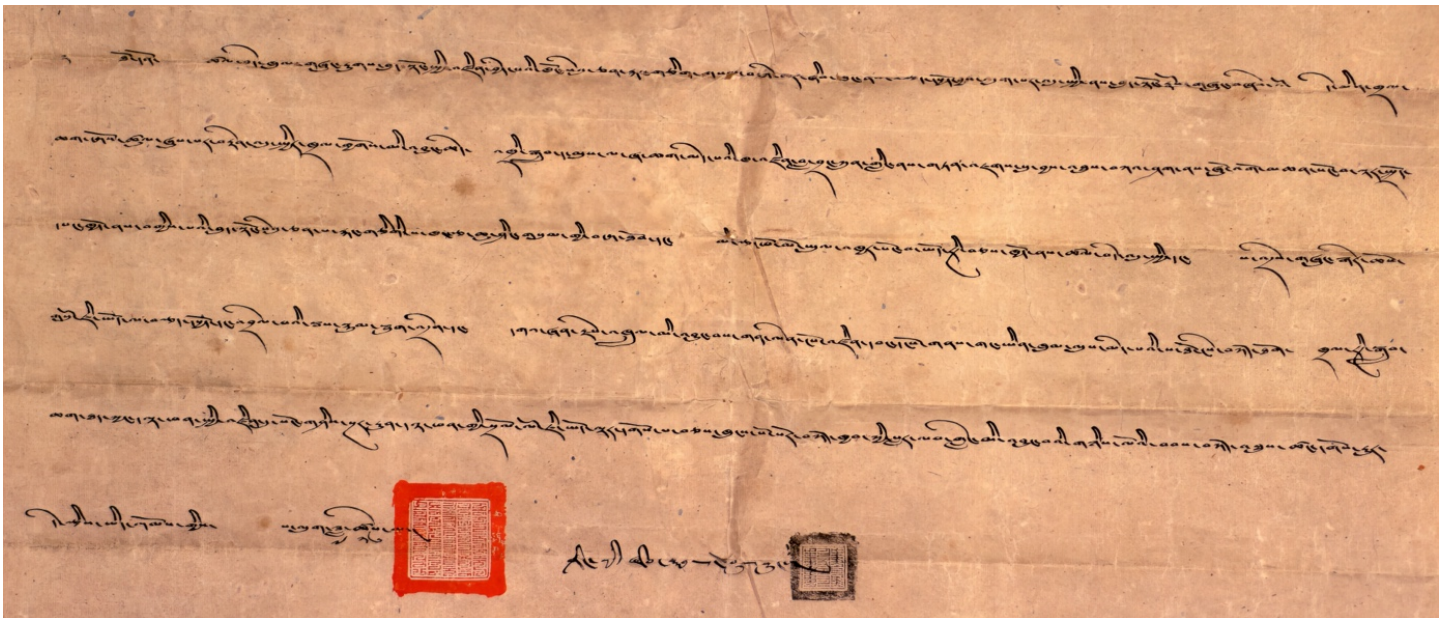
[322] KHD: 0426_KHD_S35.

Seal impression from 1859 (*sa lug*)[323]



3.5 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm





Chab spel and Ma grong’s edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba’i dmigs bu* presents a rough tracing of the seal impression.[324]

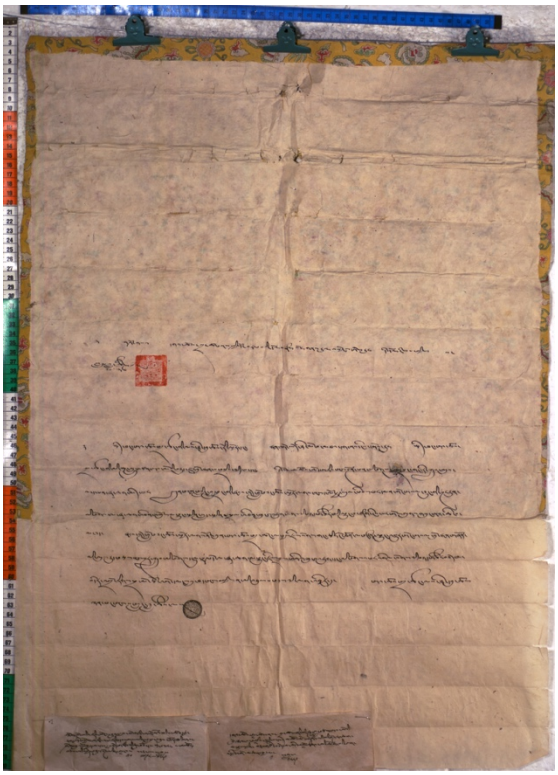
[323] KDL: 012 2-1/#/48/6/4 (ID 1517).

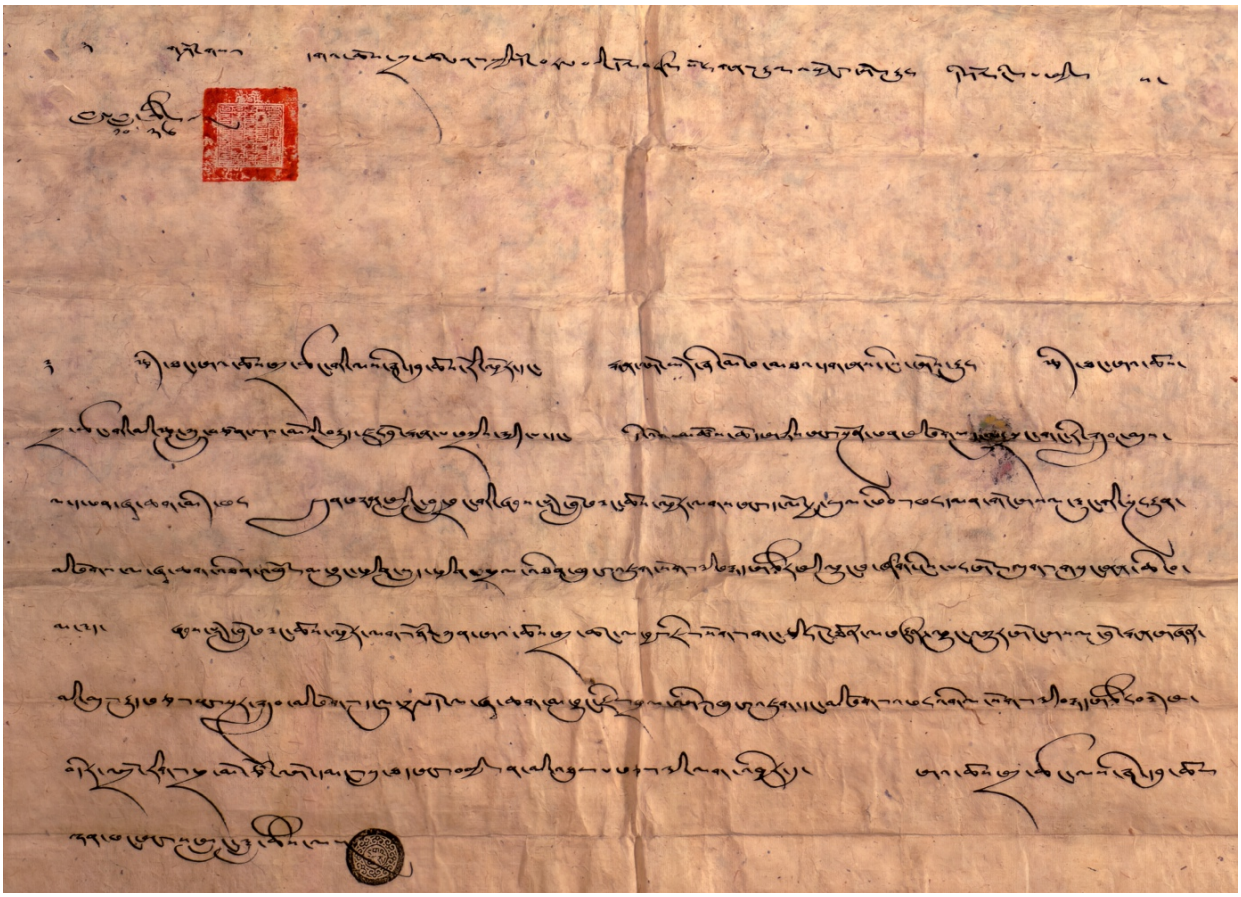
[324] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 67. For an accurate tracing see Schuh 1981, 221.

SEAL 89

Five-column seal impression of the third De mo regent Ngag dbang blo bzang phrin las rab rgyas (1855–1899, r. 1886–1895) from 1889 (*sa glang*).[325] Unfortunately, there is currently only one illegible impression of this seal at hand.

3.4 x 3.4 (2.4 x 2.3) cm





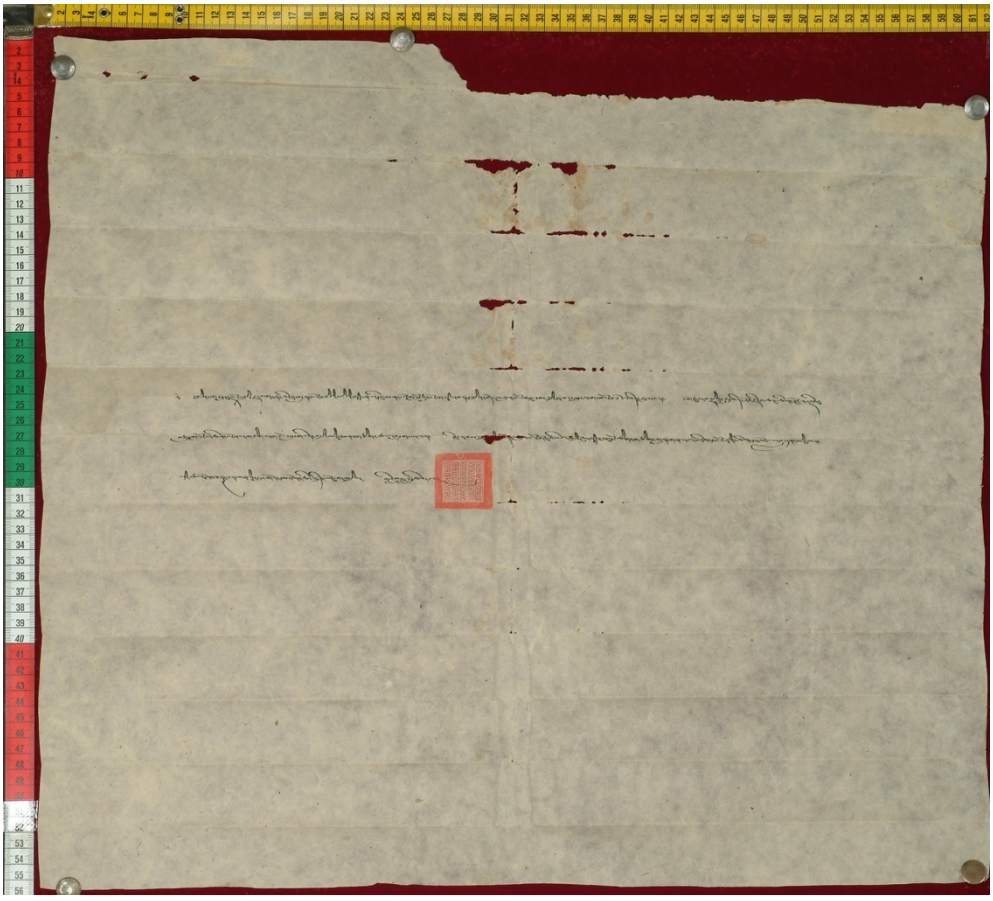
[325] KDL: 012 2-1/#/71/10/4 (ID 1851).

SEAL 90

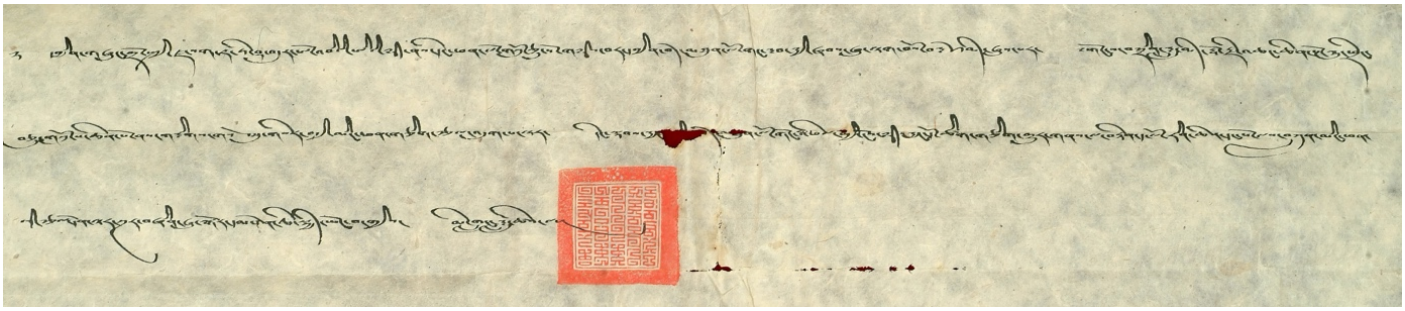
Seal impression of the second Rwa sgreng regent Thub bstan ’jam dpal ye shes rgyal mtshan (1912–1947, r. 1943–1941) from 1937 (*me glang*)[326]

(1) *Z//ra {rwa} sgreng P*
(2) *a chi thu P*
(3) *hul ling P*
(4) *ho thog thu’i*
(5) *tham ga dge’o P*

3.7 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

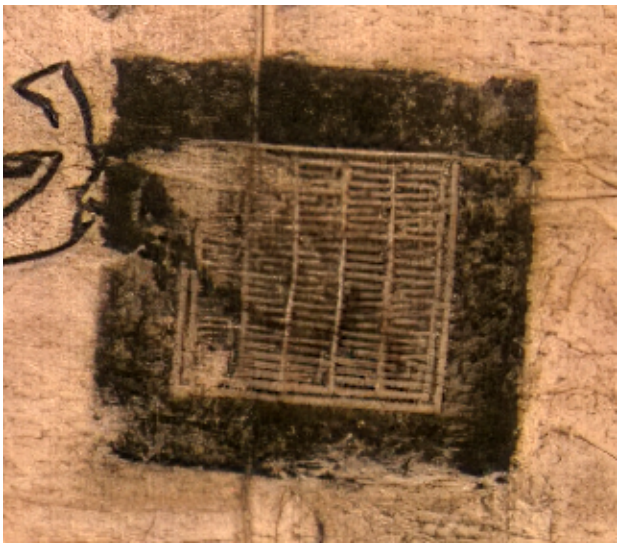


[326] LTWA: 0979_LTWA_191. The dimensions given in Schuh 2018, 364, are not correct.



SEAL 91

Undated seal impression of mDo smad *spyi khyab bla ma* Byams pa bstan dar (1870-1923, in office as Commissioner of Khams 1913–1923)[327]



2.8 x 2.7 (1.8 x 1.7) cm

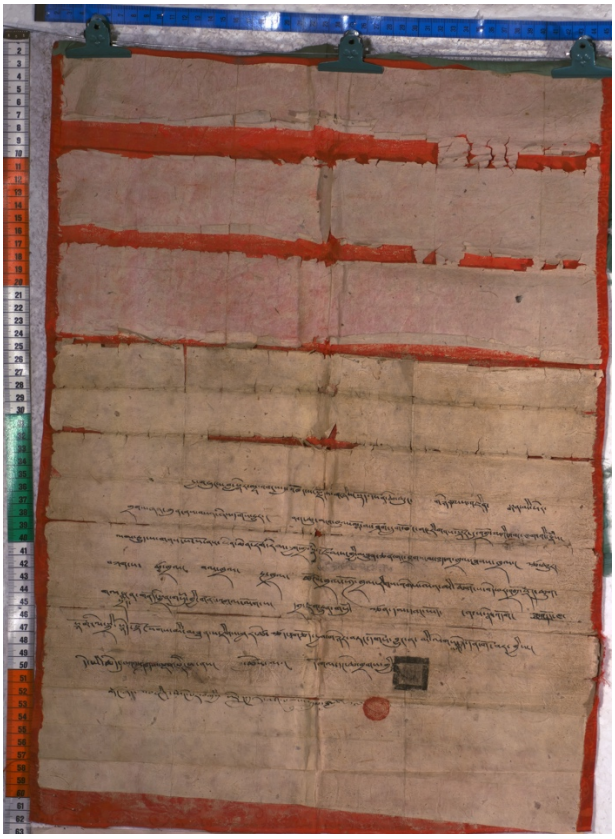
(1) *sa kun byams pas*
(2) *skyong zhing bde P*
(3) *skyid bstan pa*
(4) *dar bar byed pa'i P*
(5) *dpal gyi tham ka//*

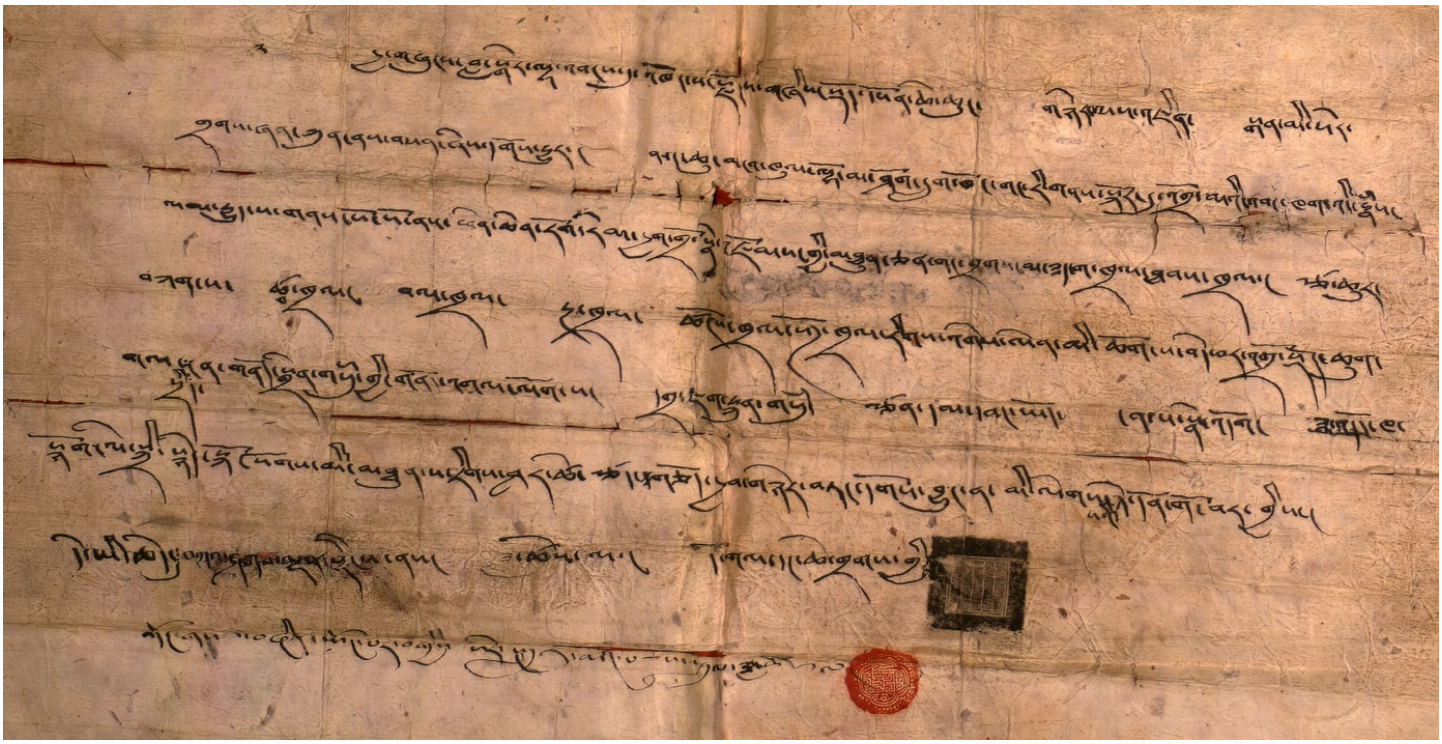
"Glorious seal of the one who causes happiness and (Buddhist) teachings to grow by caring for all places with love."

For the seal inscription, the name of the owner of the seal, "Byams pa bstan dar", was poetically extended. Another of his seals, mentioned by Jamyang Norbu, was apparently designed in a similar way.[328]

[327] KDL: 012 2-1/#/53/35/4 (ID 1596). The document was mistakenly attributed to Pho lha nas by the Tibetan Archives in Lhasa.

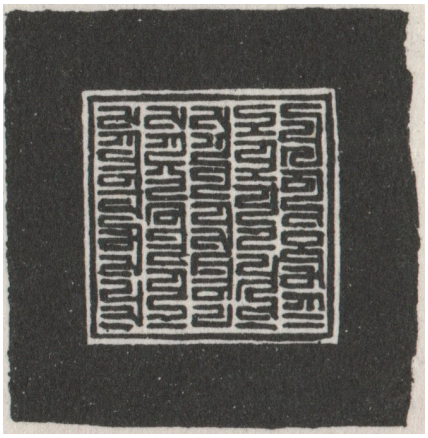
[328] Jamyang Norbu 2008. For a good overview of the career of Byams pa bstan dar see Travers 2019, 230–235.



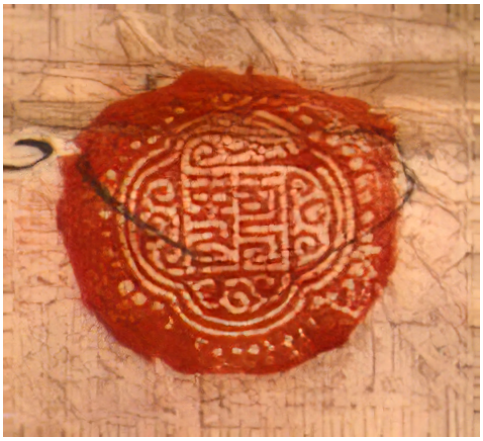


Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* contains an illustration of the seal impression. There, it says that this seal is apparently the seal of mDo smad *spyi khyab bka' blon bla ma* Byams pa bstan dar.[329]

[329] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 75.



The red, round, two-column seal impression with the inscription *chos rgyal* in 'Phags pa script at the end of the confirmation, dated 1929 (*sa sbrul*) apparently comes from the private seal of an incarnation who is called Ser sprul here.


2.0 cm

4.3.5 Six-column Seal Inscriptions

SEAL 92

Seal impressions of lHa bzang Khan (r. 1703–1717)

Impression from 1710 (*lcags stag*)[330]

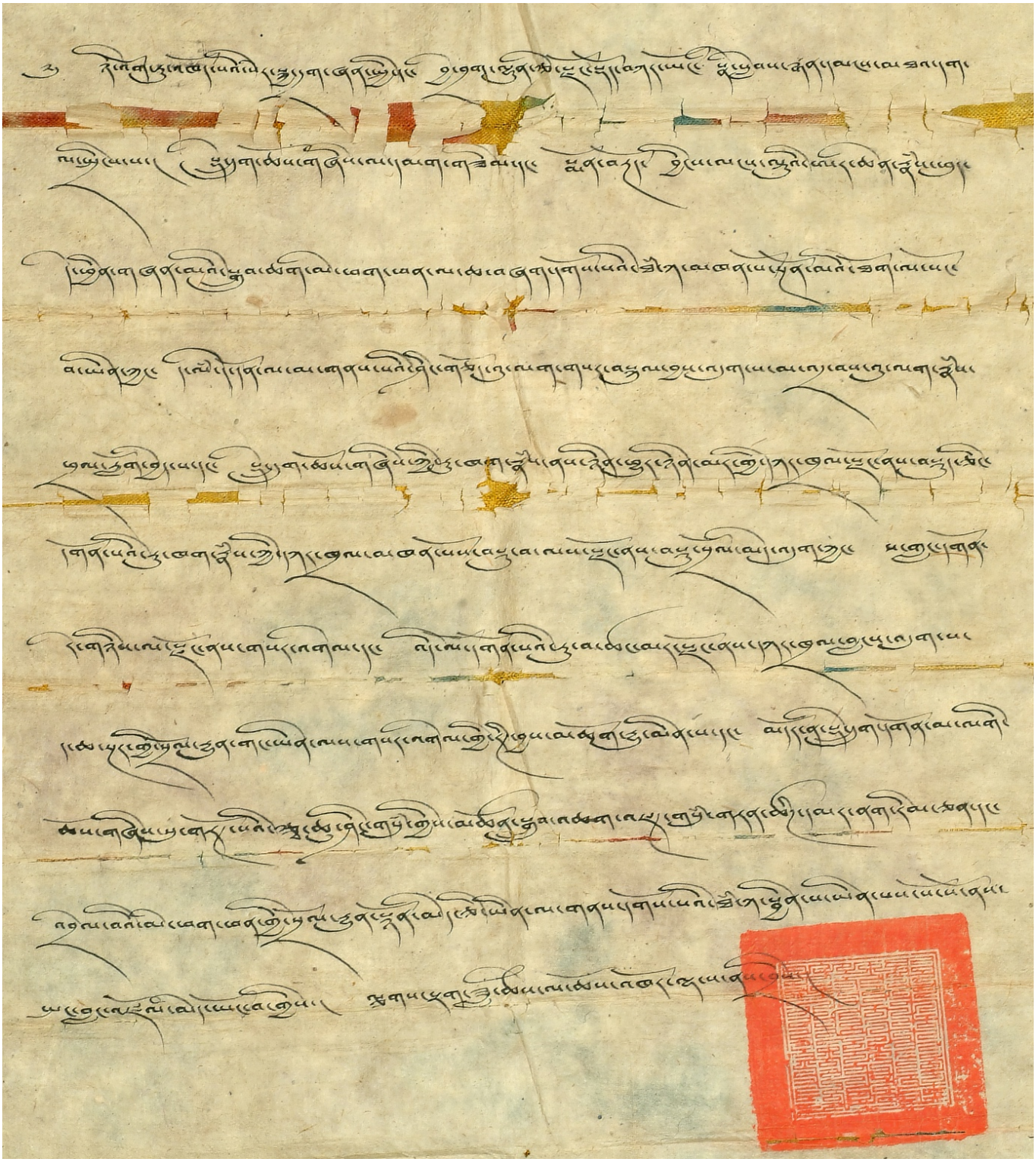
[330] LTWA: 0821_LTWA_13.

5.7 x 5.6 (4.0 x 3.9) cm

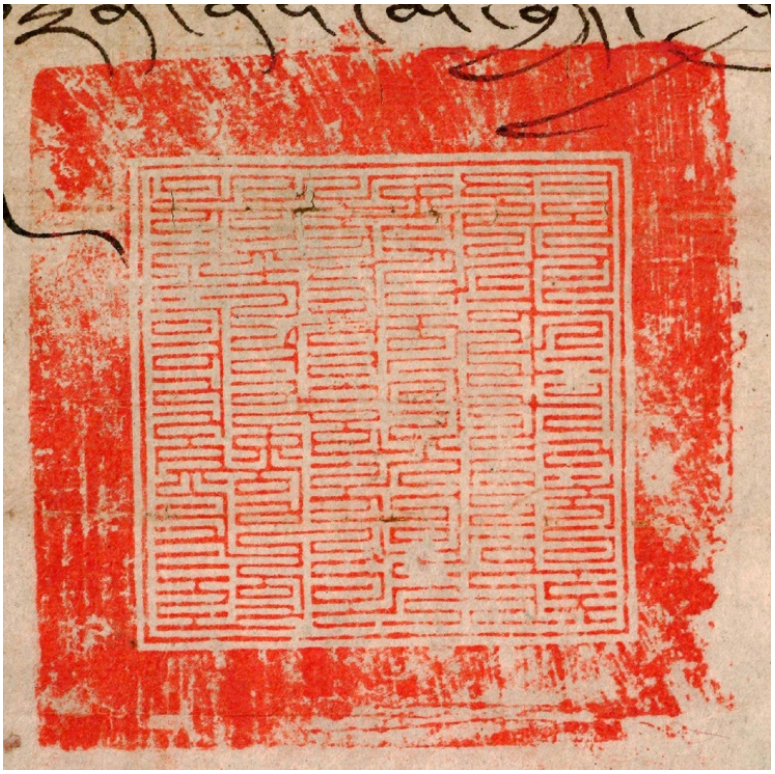
(1) *bsod nans {nams} stobs dang P*[331]
(2) *’byor pa phin {phun} tshogs dang P*
(3) *ldan thams cad dbang bsdud*
(4) *chos kyi rgyal po’i mnga’*
(5) *thang* [*pa*][332] *nyan pas sa steng khyab*
(6) [*c*]*ing*[333] *bde legs su gyur ro*

“As the earth is filled with obedience to the one who has the power of a religious king, who possesses merit, strength and excellent riches, and who has brought everything under his power, (everything) turns into well-being.”

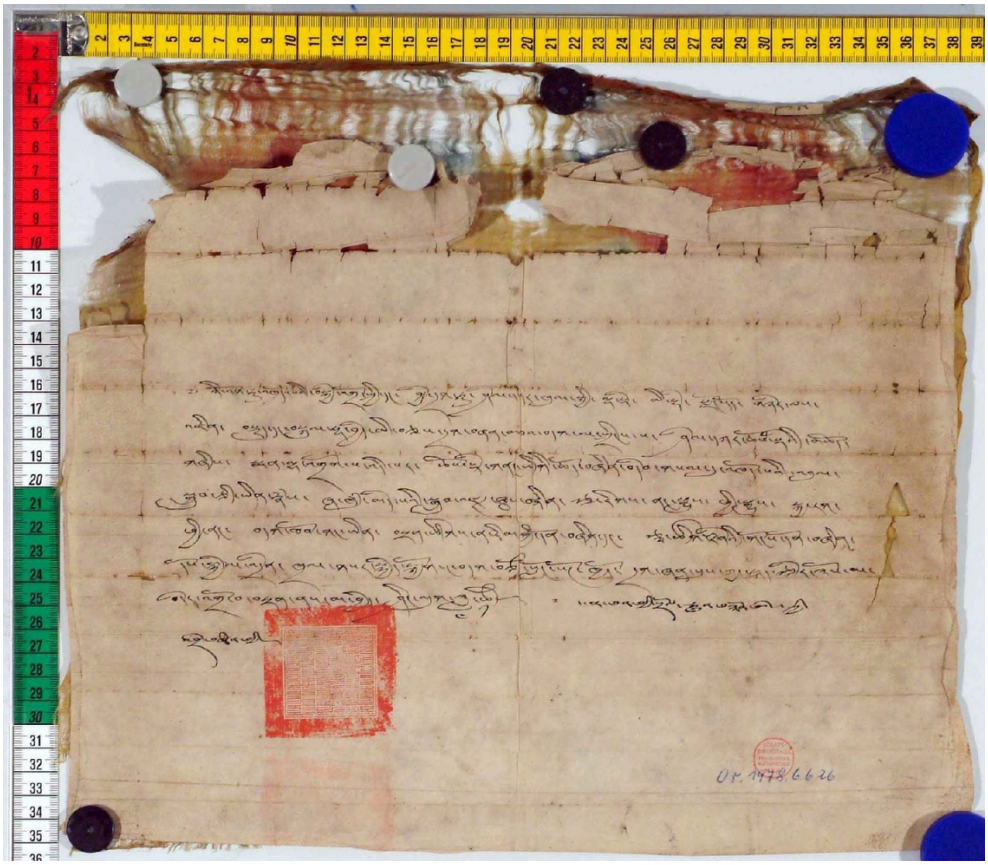
[331] In my view, the reading suggested in Schuh 1981, 303n8, seems more obvious than the reading in Schuh 1981, 52.
[332] The square brackets indicate that the drawing of the letter is imprecise.
[333] The square brackets indicate that the drawing of the letter is imprecise.



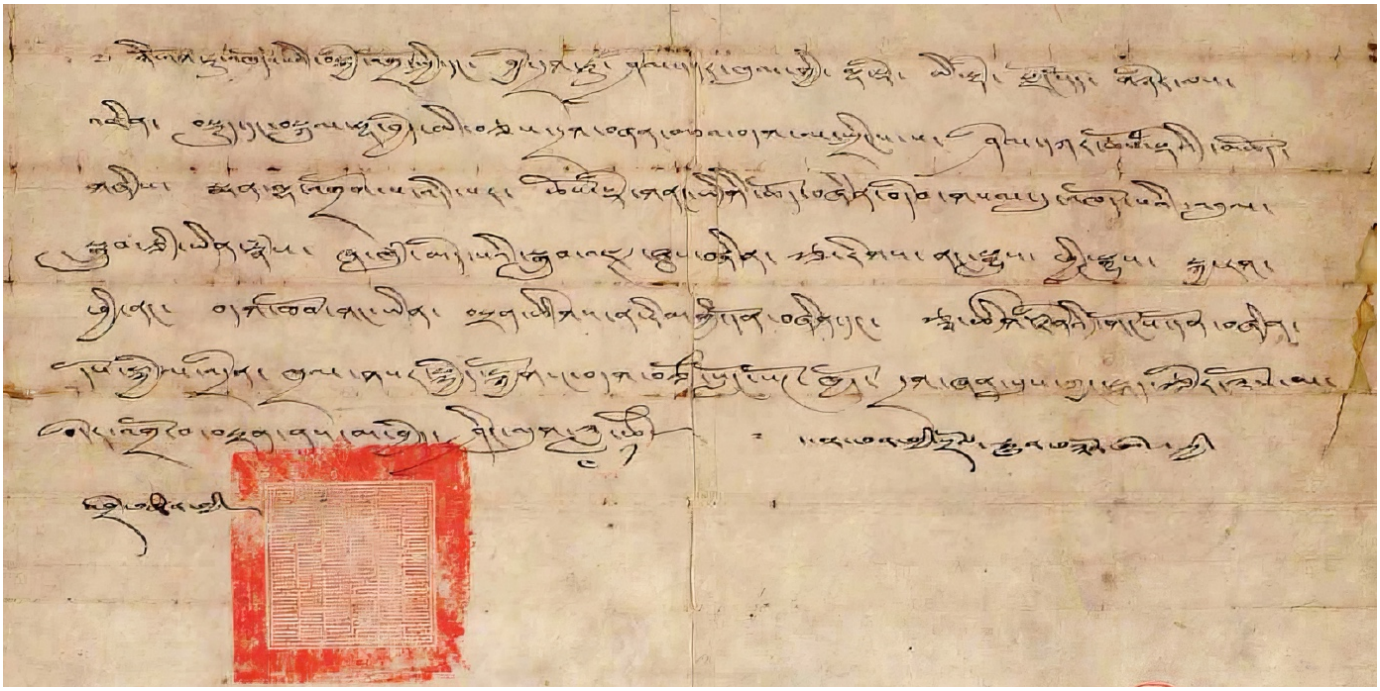
Impression from 1715 (*shing lug*)[334]



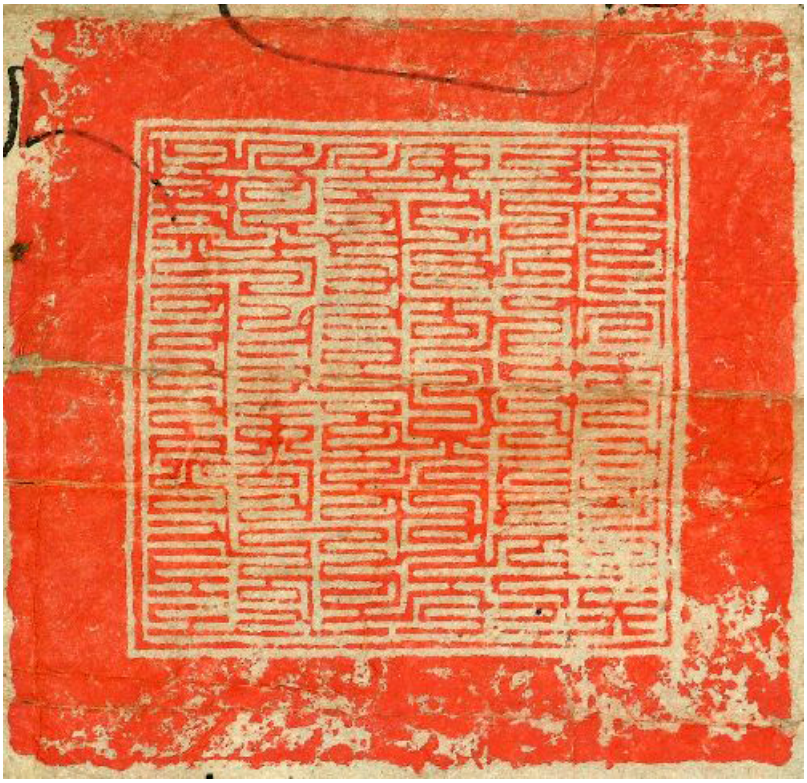
5.6 x 5.5 (4.0 x 4.0) cm



[334] SBB: 0003_SBB6626.

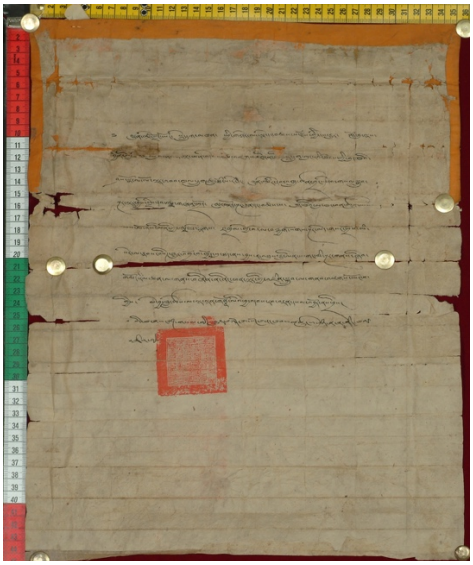


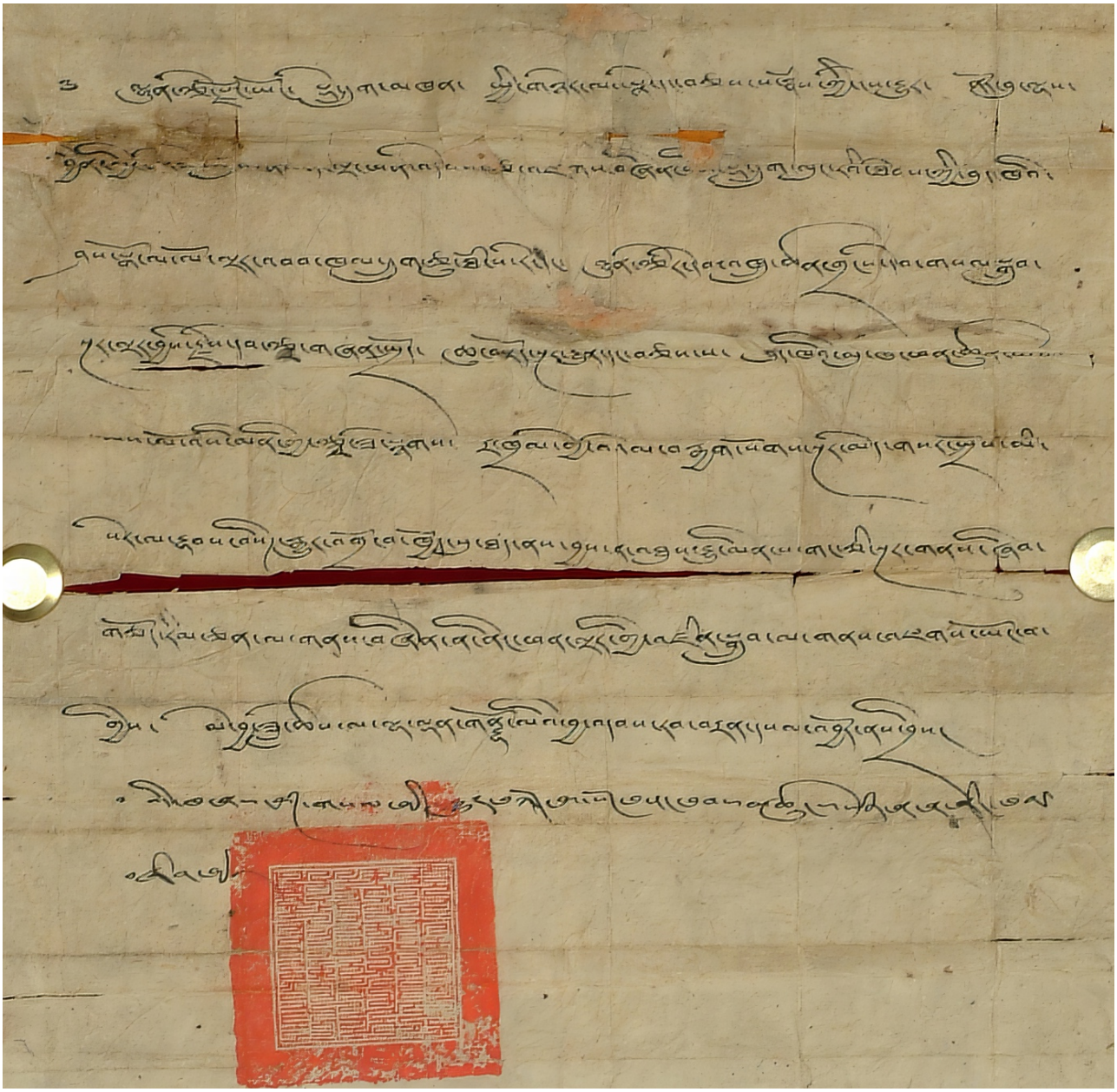
Impression from 1717 (*me bya*)[335]



5.7 x 5.6 (4.1 x 4.0) cm

[335] LTWA: 0815_LTWA_7.

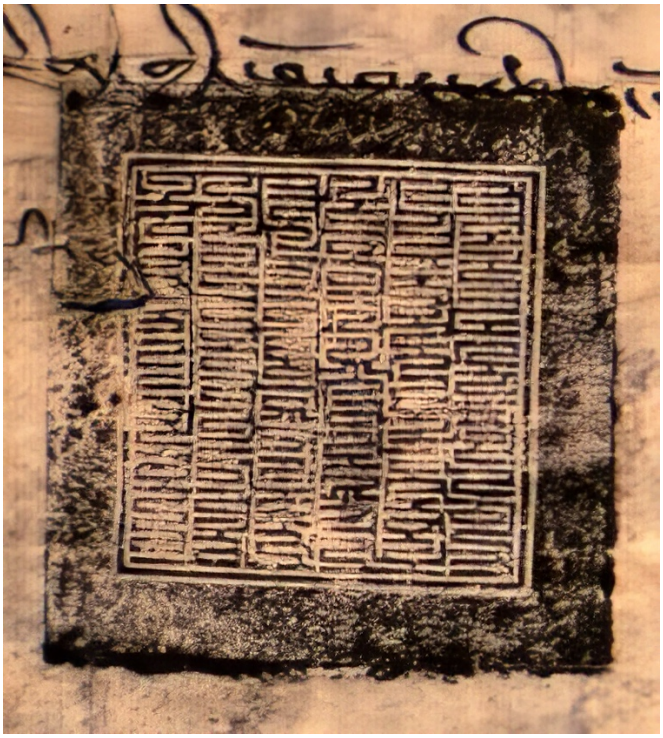




The digital archives contain altogether twenty-five impressions of the six-column seal of lHa bzang Khan. It is one of the few seals in which the individual columns of the inscription are interlaced by superfluous horizontal lines. For a tracing of the inscription see Schuh 1981, 51. Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 52, also contains a very rough tracing.

SEAL 93

Impression from *sde srid* Ngag dbang rin chen from 1703 (*chu lug*)[336]



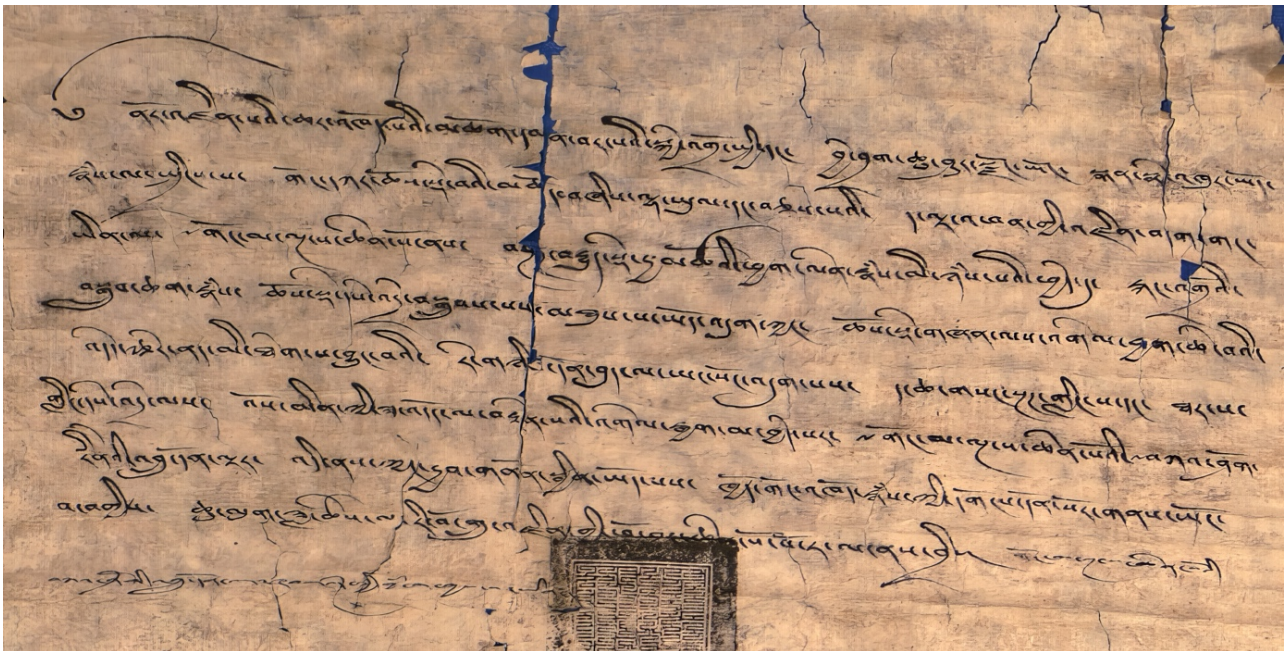
4.2 x 4.2 (3.1 x 3.2) cm

What is striking are the cross-connections between the columns, which are also characteristic of the inscription on lHa bzang Khan's seal shown above. The inscription reads:

(1) *khams gsum dbang* [*du*]/
(2) *b*[*s*]*dud* [*cing s*]*rid gsum*
(3) *zil gyi*[*s*] *gnon pa chos*/
(4) *ldan gyal* {*rgyal*} *po'i s*[*t*]*obs*/
(5) *'byor mnga' thang* [*s*]*nyan pa*/
(6) *srid rcer* {*rtser*} *'ba*[*r zhi*]*ng gyas* {*rgyas*}

"May the strength, wealth, power and fame of the devout king, who brought the three realms (of desire, form and formlessness) under his control and who outshines the three worlds (of the nagas, the humans and the gods), shine and spread as the pinnacle of (cyclic) existence!"

[336] KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/2/4 (ID 1051).



According to the Tibetan Archives in Lhasa, the document confirming ownership rights granted to the monastery Gong dkar chos sde by the Fifth Dalai Lama was issued by the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. However, the issuer is not mentioned by name in the document itself and the seal impression at the end of the document has not yet been documented elsewhere. The date of issue would also fit with *sde srid* Ngag dbang rin chen, who succeeded his father Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho in office in 1703.[337]

While the very rough tracing of this seal contained in Chab spel and Ma grong's edition of the seal book included in the *Long ba'i dmigs bu* is of little help, the added explanations support the assumption that the owner of the seal was *sde srid* Ngag dbang rin chen.[338] Accordingly, the author of the catalog had seen at the bottom of a *she bam* document of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho issued in the eighth month of the Iron Sheep year (1703) an endorsement dated the Wood Monkey year

[337] See p. 10n20.

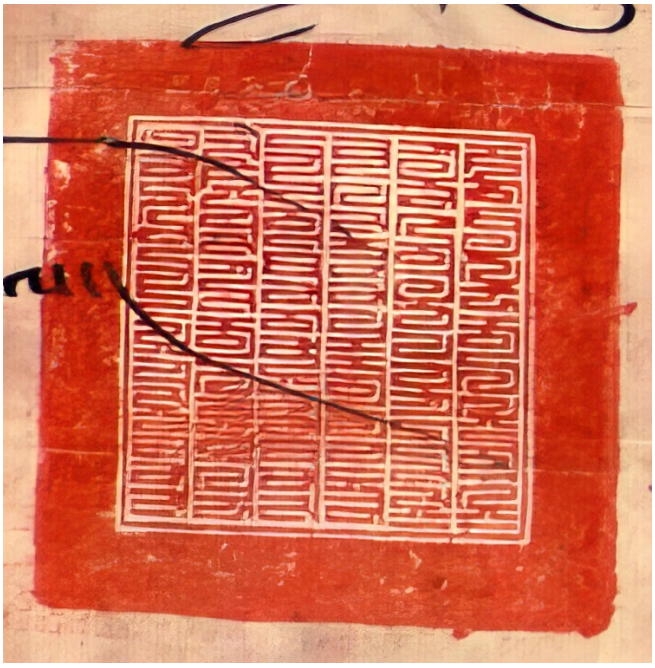
[338] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 50.

(1704) together with a black impression of this seal. Due to the matching date, he considers *sde srid* Ngag dbang rin chen to be very likely the owner of the seal but is of the opinion that further research is required. He reproduces the seal inscription as follows: *khams gsum dbang du 'dud cing srid gsum zil gyis gnon pa chos ldan rgyal po'i stobs 'byor mnga' thang snyan pa srid rtser 'bar zhing rgyas pa.*

SEAL 49

See pp. 124—132.

SEAL 50

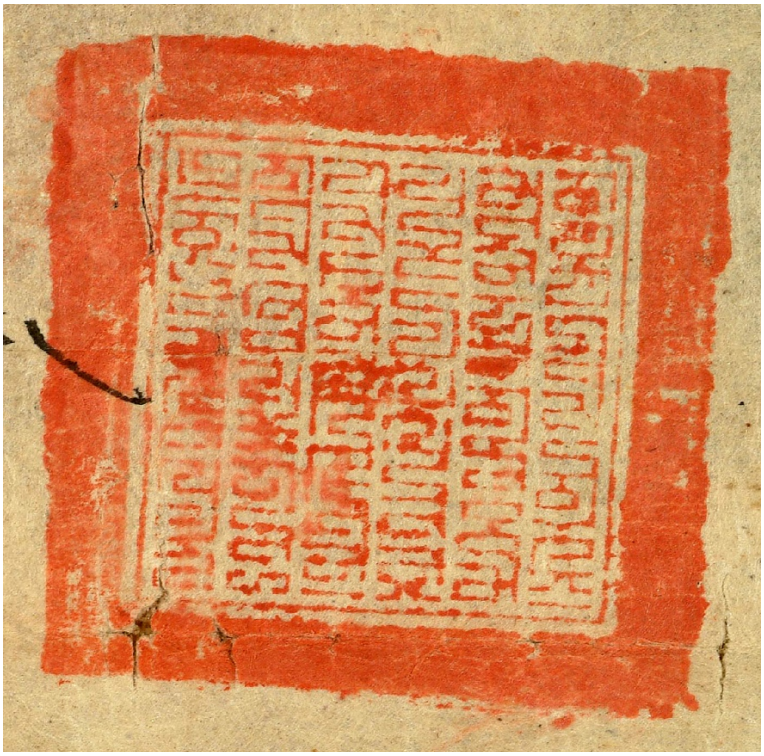


See pp. 132—134.

SEAL 94

The digital database contains numerous documents that show a seal impression of the first De mo regent Ngag dbang ’jam dpal bde legs rgya mtsho (1723–1777, r. 1757–1777) with a six-column inscription.

Impression from 1762 (*chu rta*)[339]

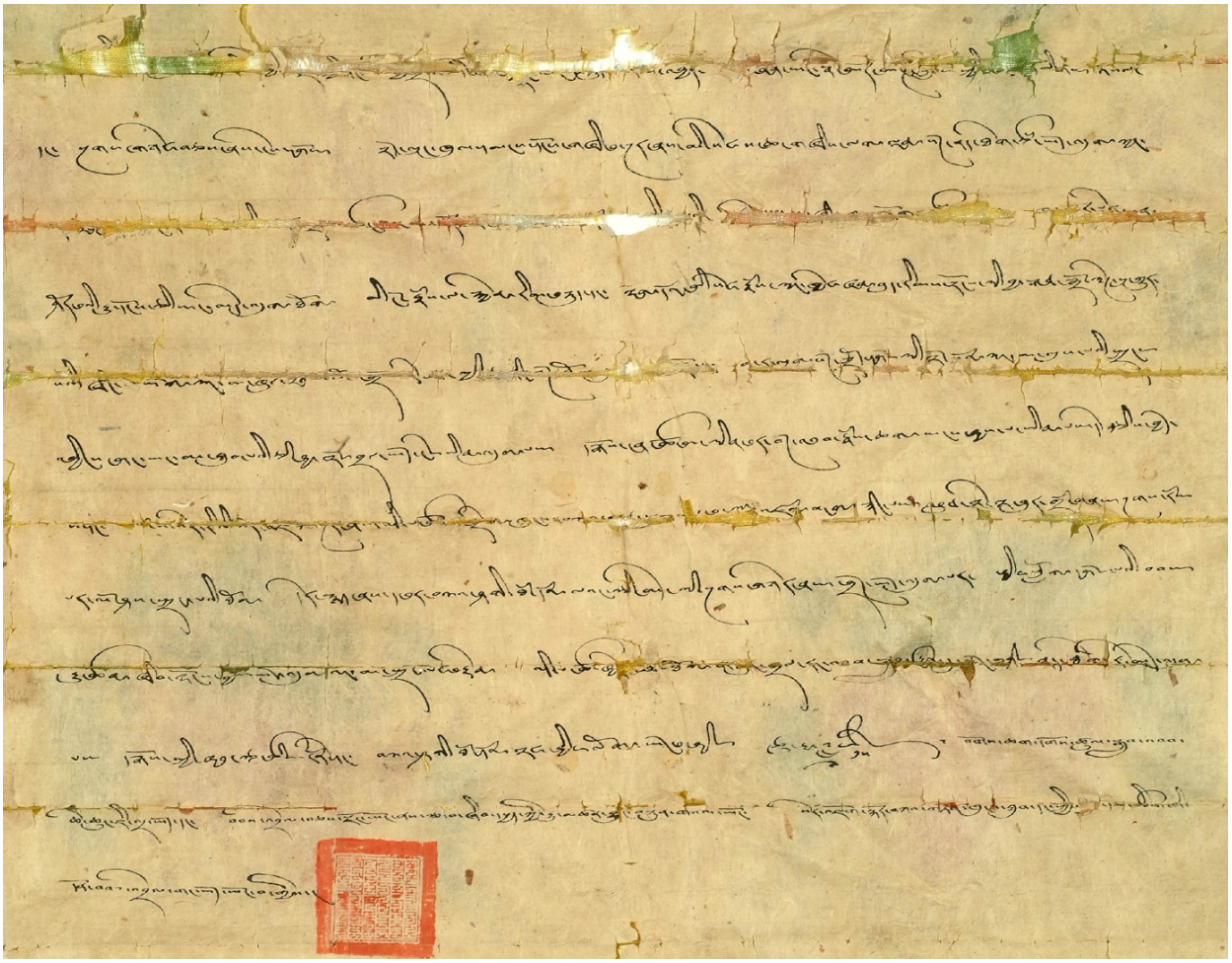


3.6 x 3.6 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

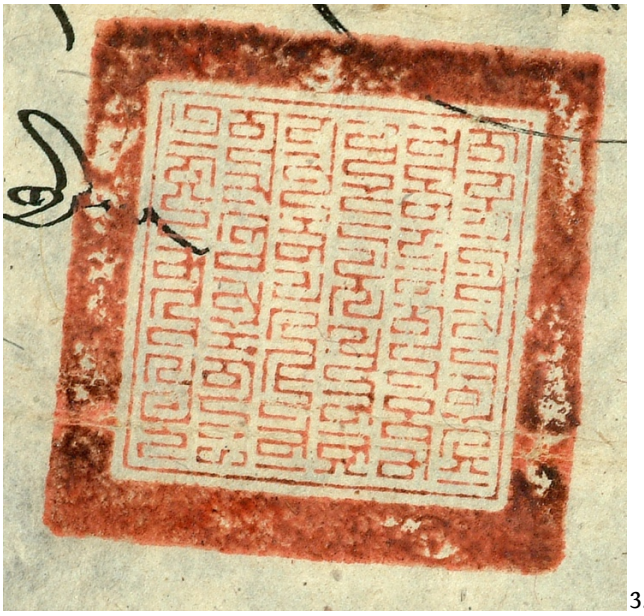
(1) *Z gong ma’i lung*
(2) *gis zhwa ser gyi P*
(3) *bstan pa ’dzin*
(4) *byed dpal ldan no*
(5) *min han gyi tham*
(6) *ga bkra shis dge’o/*

“Seal of the glorious *nomun han*, who by order (of the emperor) holds the teachings of the Yellow Hats. May there be auspiciousness! May it be virtuos!”

[339] AA: 0788_AA_2_1_156.

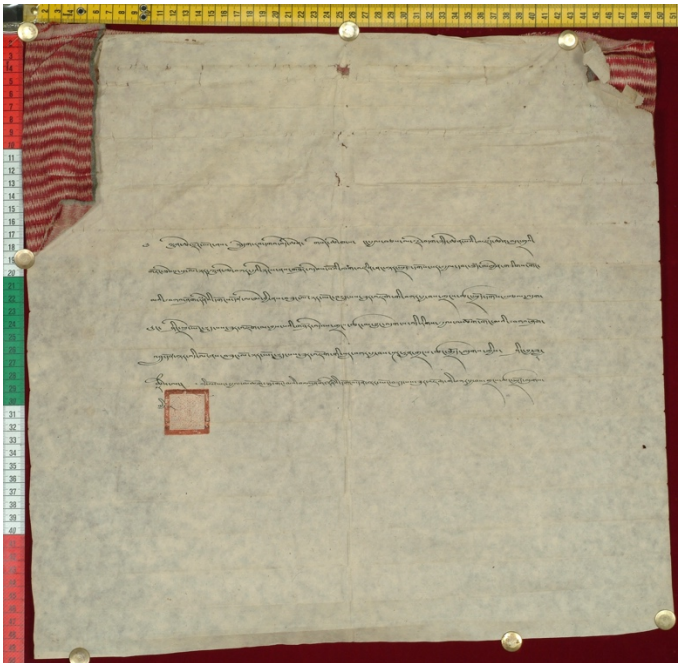


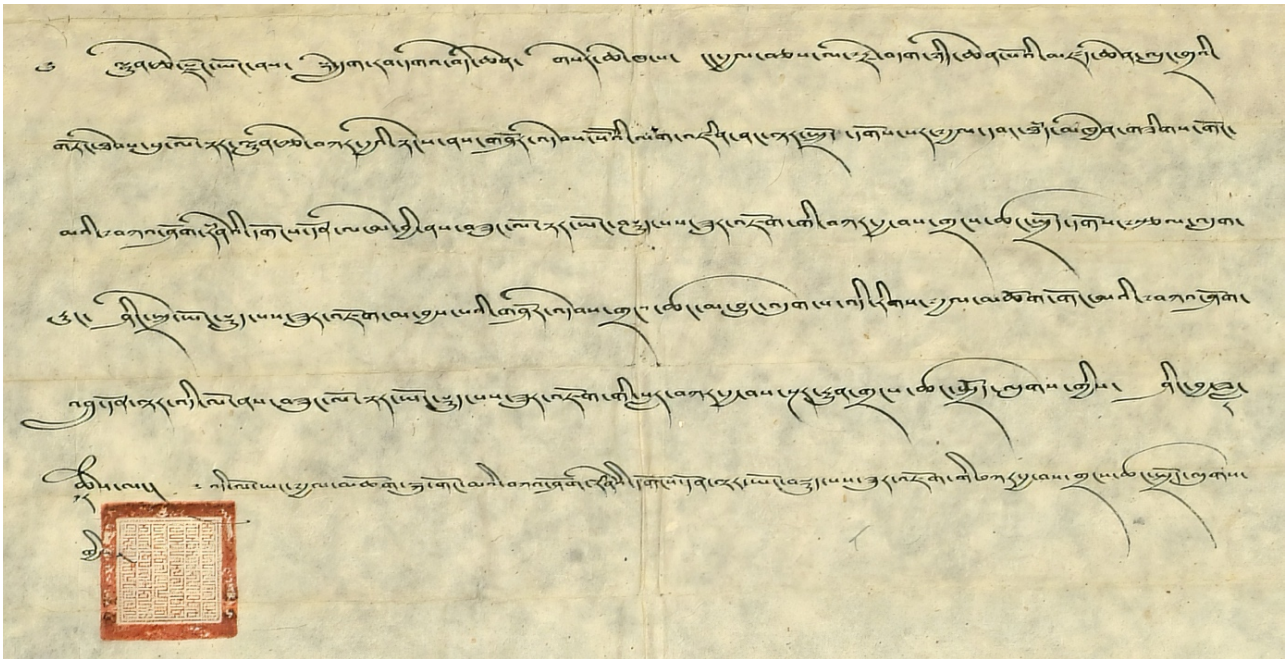
Impression from 1765 (*shing bya*)[340]



3.5 x 3.5 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

[340] LTWA: 0822_LTWA_14.





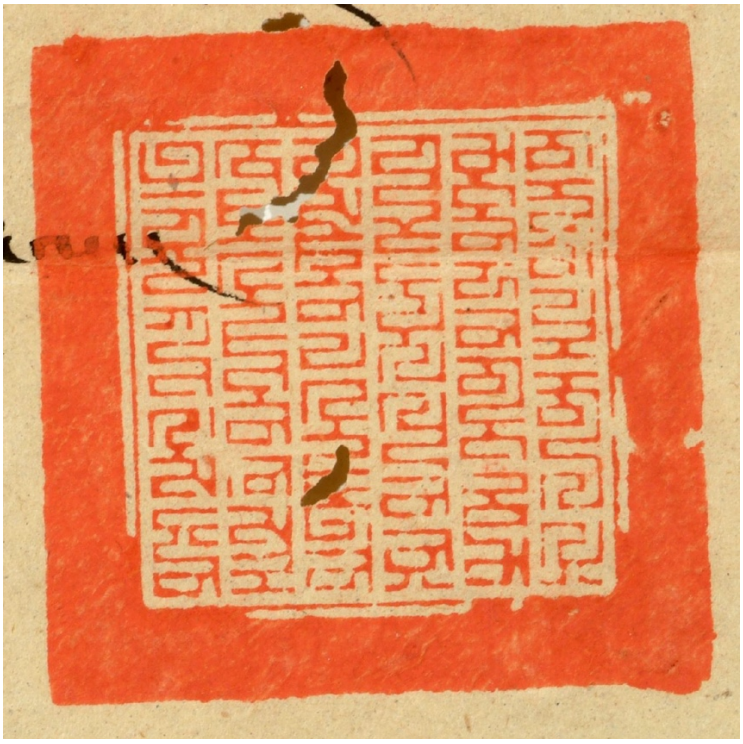
For a tracing of the seal impressions see Schuh 1981, 112.

SEAL 95

Seal impressions of the first rTa tshag regent Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa'i mgon po (1760–1819, r. 1789–1790, 1791–1810). According to the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, the first rTa tshag regent used this seal from 1805 (*shing glang*) to 1810 (*lcags rta*).[341]

[341] *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 27r; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 66. For tracings see Schuh 1981, 132, and Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 66.

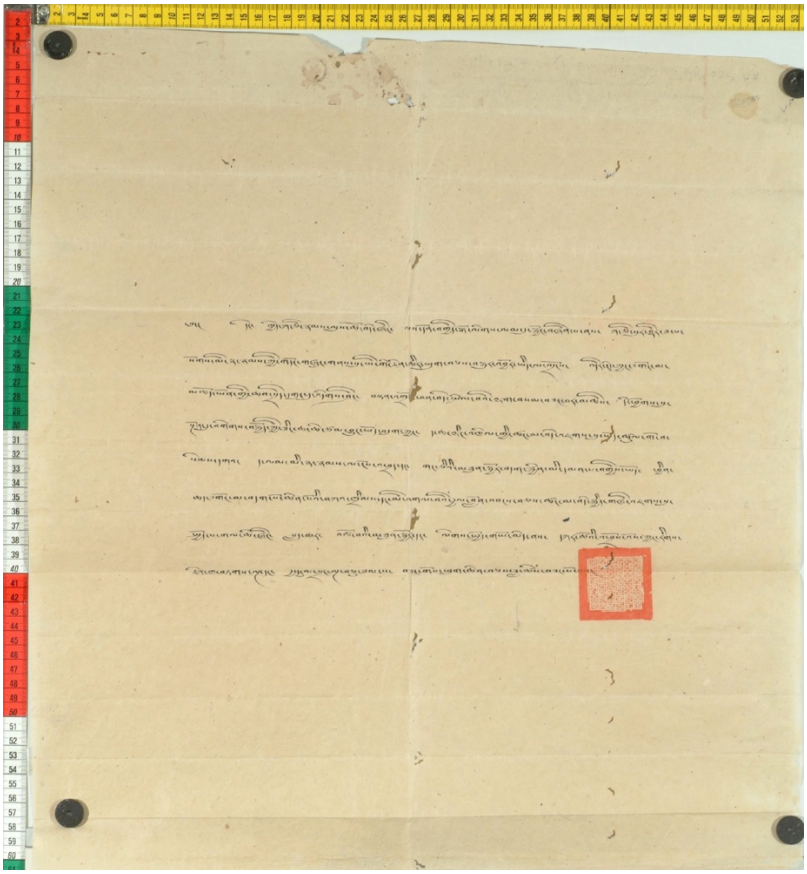
Impression between 1805 and 1810[342]



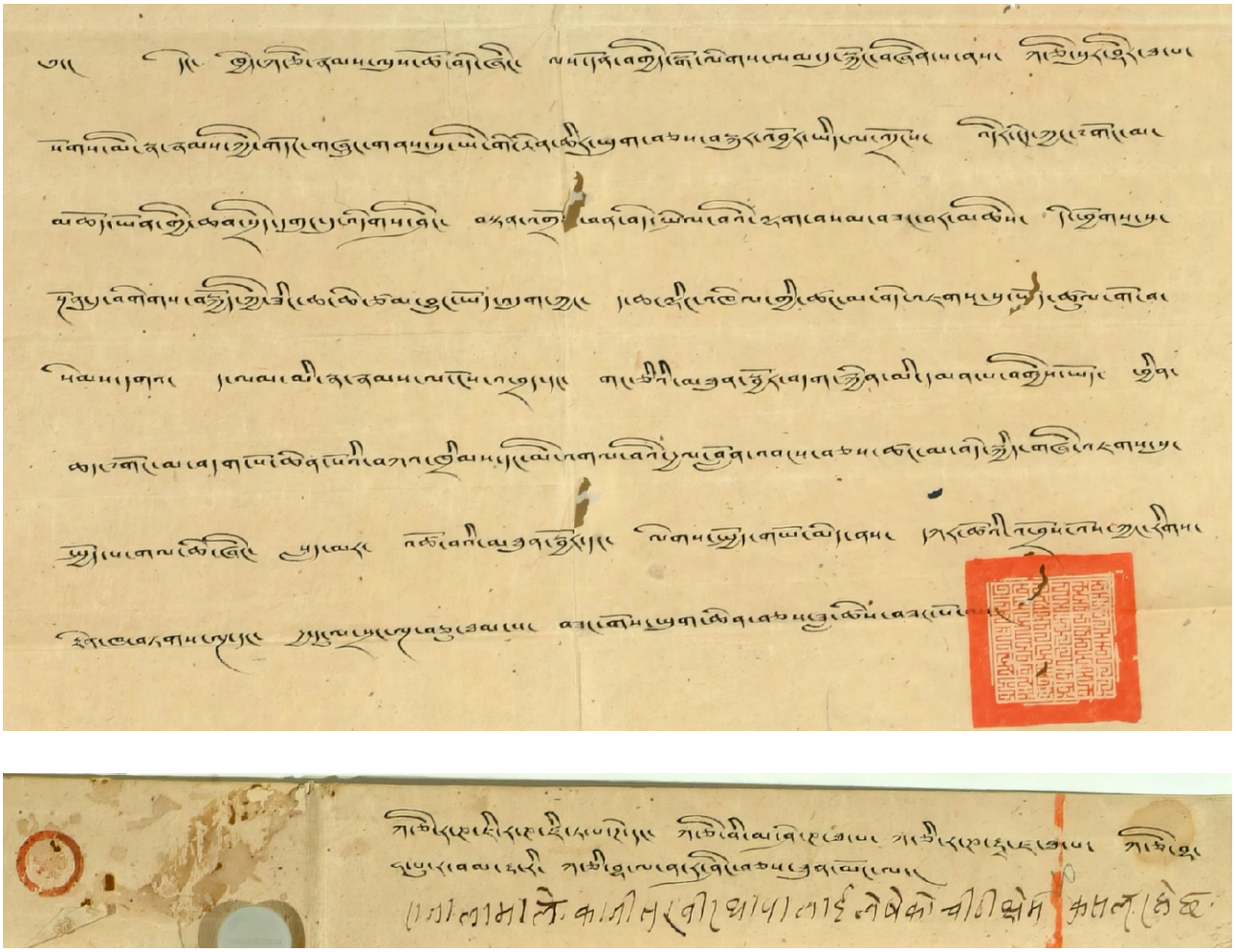
5.0 x 5.0 (3.9 x 3.9) cm

(1) *Z bod kyi las don*
(2) *khur 'dzin zha ser*
(3) *bstan pa 'dzin*
(4) *byed dpal ldan no*
(5) *min han gyi tham*
(6) *ga rnam par rgyal lo*

"Seal of the glorious *nomun han*, who bears the burden of (government) duties of Tibet and holds the teachings of the Yellow Hats. Complete victory!"

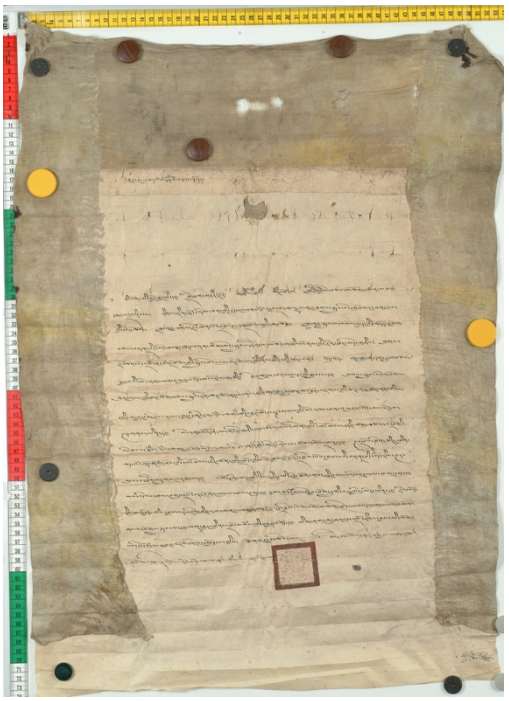


[342] KHD: 0448_KHD_S116.

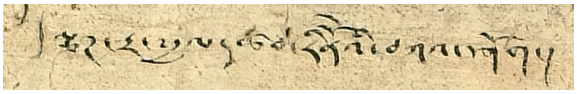


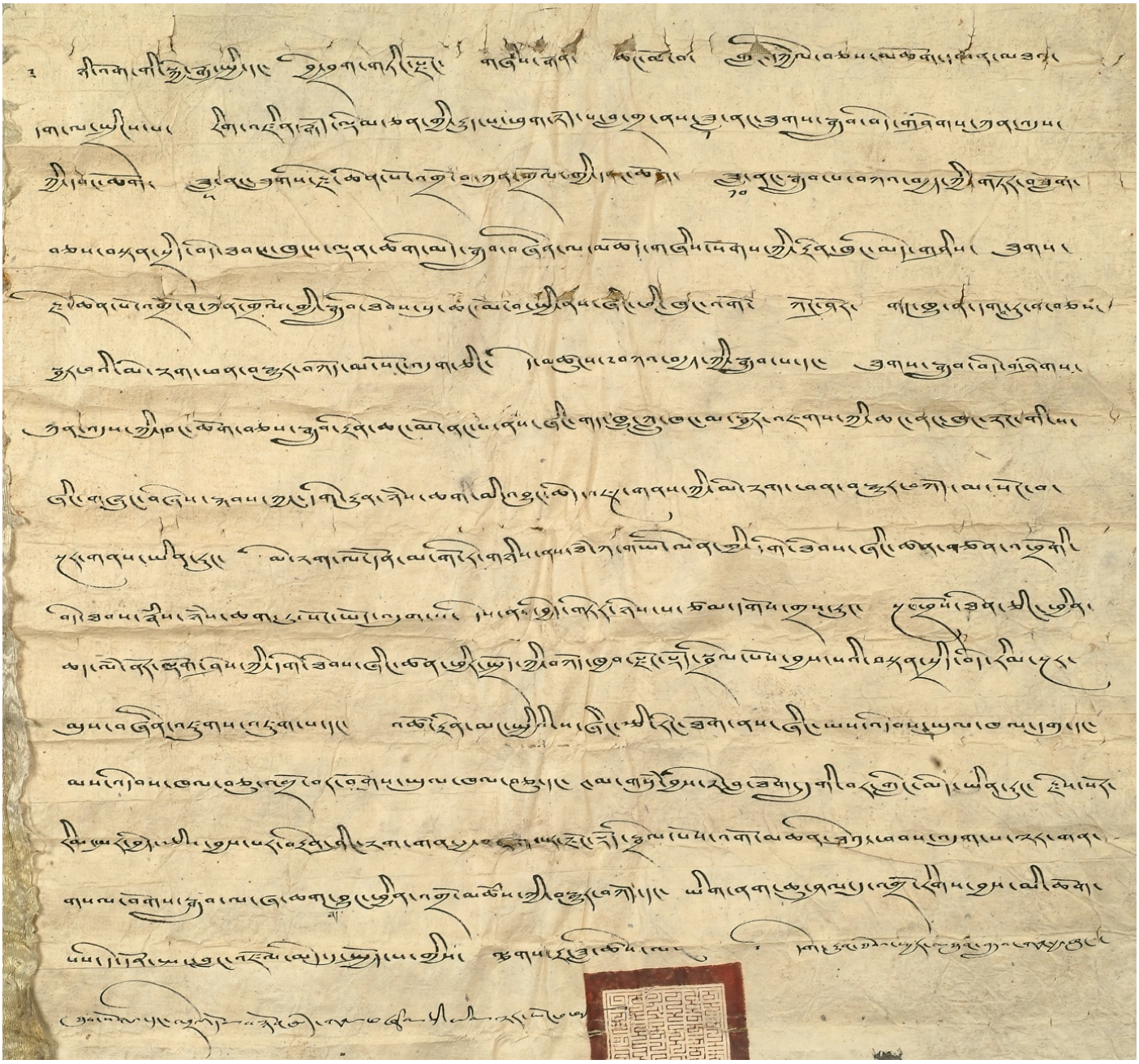
Impression from 1810 (*lcags rta*)[343]

5.0 x 5.0 (3.8 x 3.9) cm

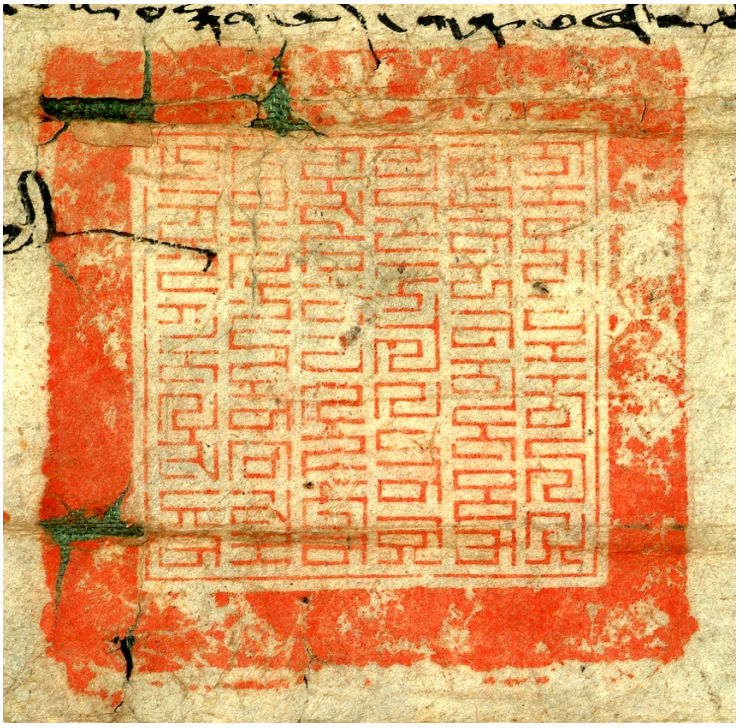


[343] WB: 1650_WB_2.



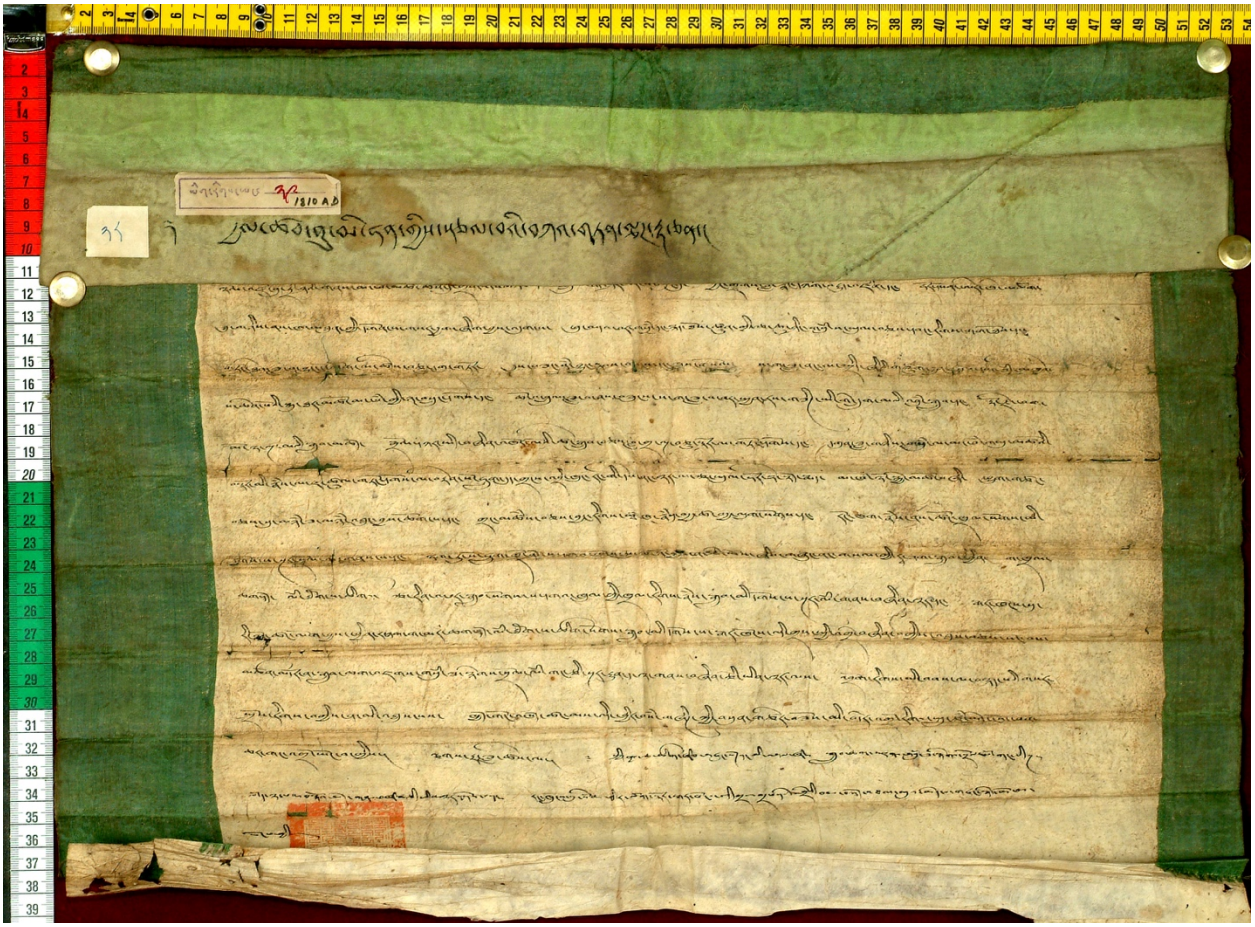


Impression from 1810 (*lcags rta*)[344]



5.1 x 4.9 (3.8 x 3.7) cm

For enlarged images of the document see appendix 1, pp. 320—321.



[344] LTWA: 0837_LTWA_29.

SEAL 96

Seal impressions of the second De mo regent Blo bzang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho (1778–1819, r. 1811–1819). The seal impression differs from that of the first De mo regent only by the letter *ja* added in Vartu script in the upper frame. See seal SEAL 94.

Impression from 1817 (*me glang*)[345]

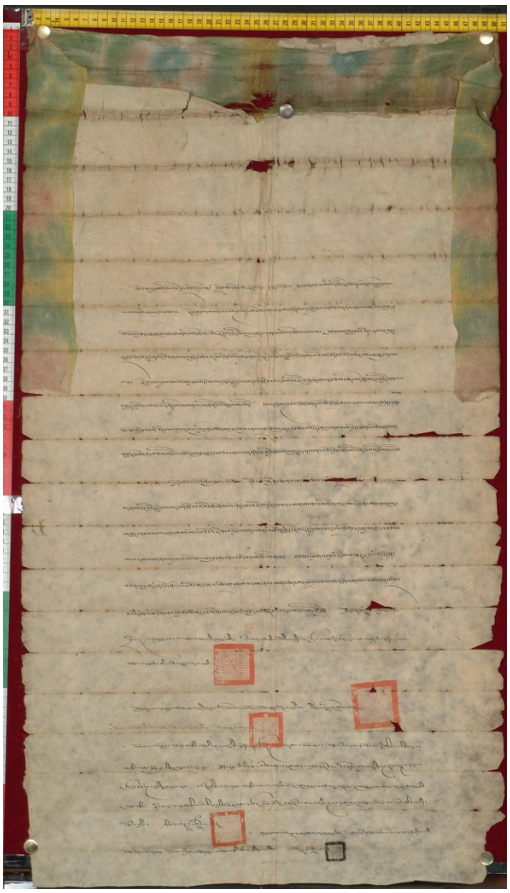
3.5 x 3.5 (2.8 x 2.8) cm

[345] LTWA: 0877_LTWA_56.

For enlarged images of the document see appendix 1, pp. 322—323.

Impression from 1816 (*shing phag*)[346]

3.6 x 3.6 (2.8 x 2.8) cm



For enlarged images of the document see appendix 1, pp. 324—325.

[346] LTWA: 1408_LTWA_650.

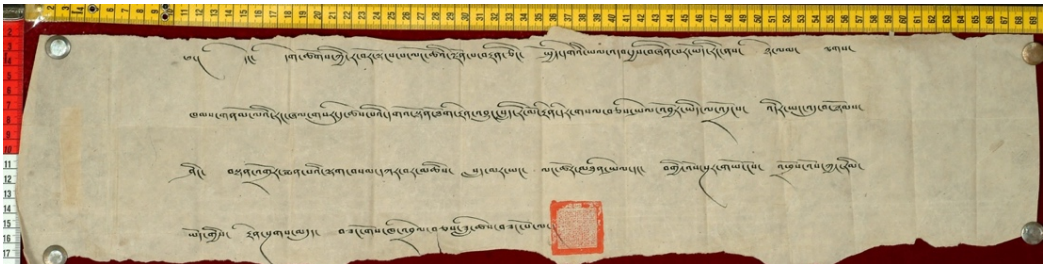
SEAL 97

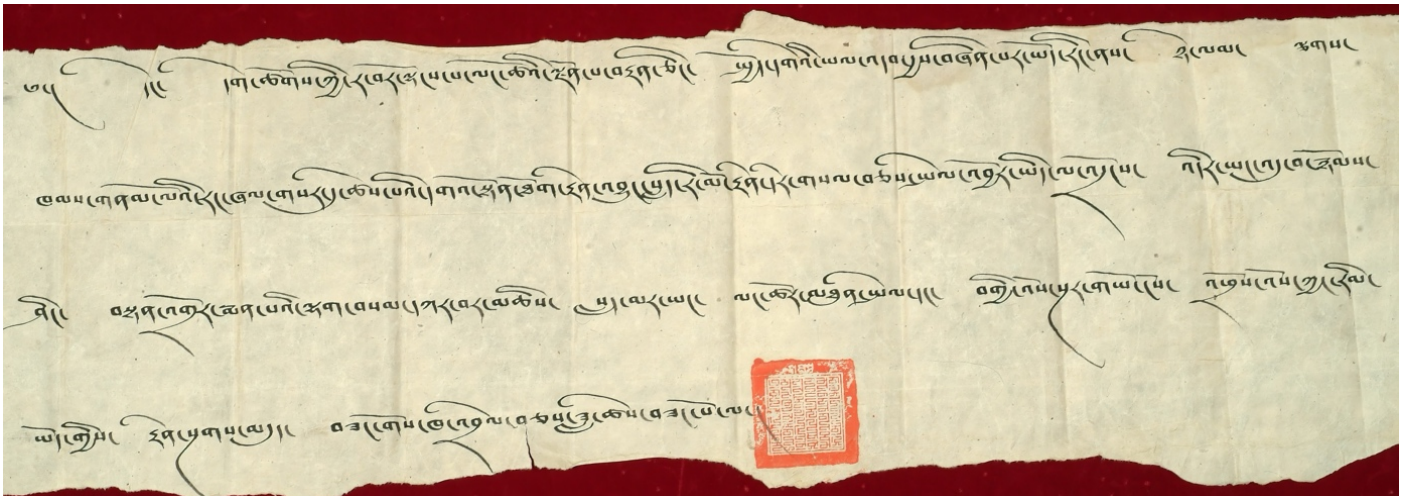
Seal impression of the third De mo regent Ngag dbang blo bzang ’phrin las rab rgyas (1855–1899, r. 1886–1895). As the *Long ba’i dmigs bu*’s catalog points out, this seal impression differs from that of the first two De mo regents only in that two more unspecified letters in Vartu script have been added at the top of the frame.[347] The following impression dates between 1886 and 1895.[348]

3.6 x 3.6 (2.7 x 2.7) cm

[347] *Long ba’i dmigs bu* 26v; Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 64–65.

[348] LTWA: 1068_LTWA_279.





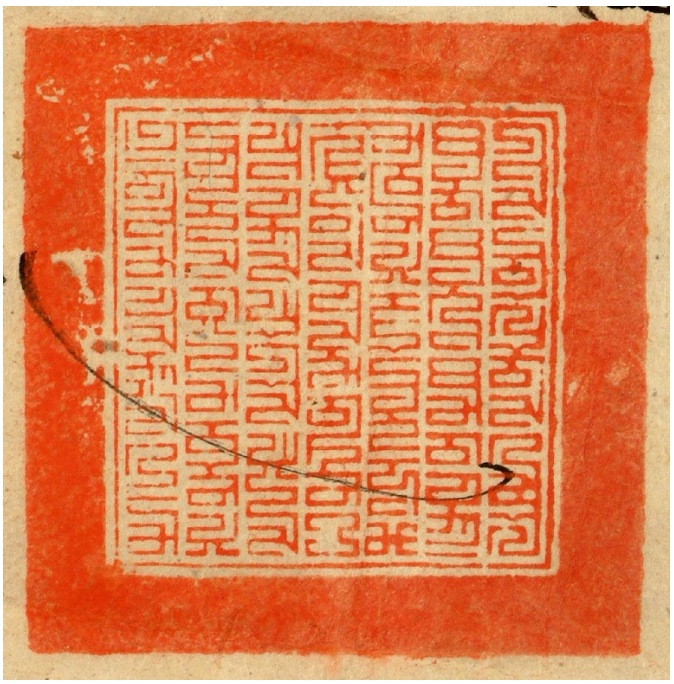
4.3.6 Seven-column Seal Inscriptions

SEAL 98

Seal impressions of the first rTa tshag regent Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa'i mgon po (r. 1789–1790, 1791–1810). For a tracing see Schuh 1981, 130. According to the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, the first rTa tshag regent used the seven-column seal from 1791 (*lcags phag*) to 1805 (*shing glang*).[349] The first impression is from an undated document.[350]

[349] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 22, 66; *Long ba'i dmigs bu* 8r, 27r. Note that Chab spel and Ma grong 1991 does not contain an image of the seal impression but merely refers to the impression of the seven-column seal of the second rTa tshag regent with regard to the inscription. Due to apparently inadvertently incorrect dates, the explanations of this seal given by Schuh in 1981 are somewhat confusing. By referring to the *Long ba'i dmigs bu*, he twice states 1891 instead of 1791 (*lcags phag*) as the start of the use of the seven-column seal. He also erroneously gives the year 1892 instead of 1792 (*chu byi*) for the awarding of the *samati pakṣi* title together with a silver seal by the emperor. (Schuh 1981, 129–130)

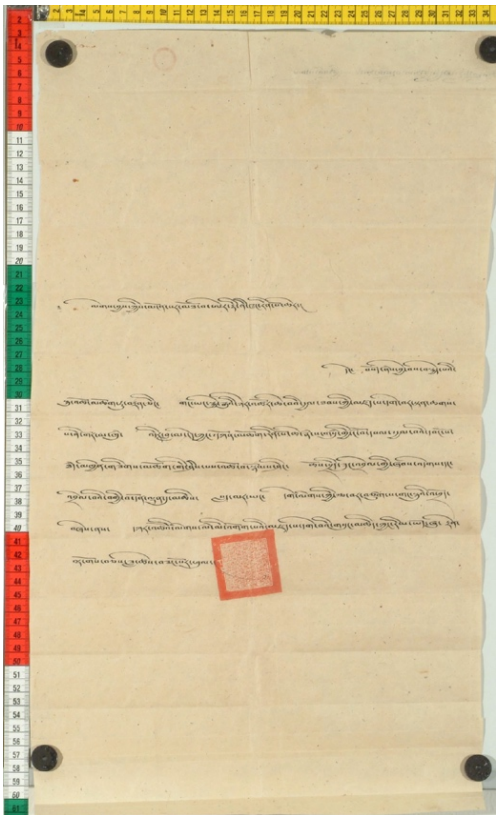
[350] KHD: 0392_KHD_S68.

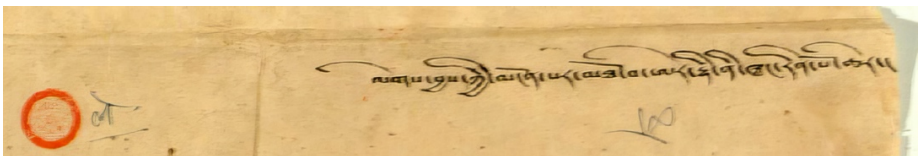


4.7 x 4.8 (3.5 x 3.6) cm

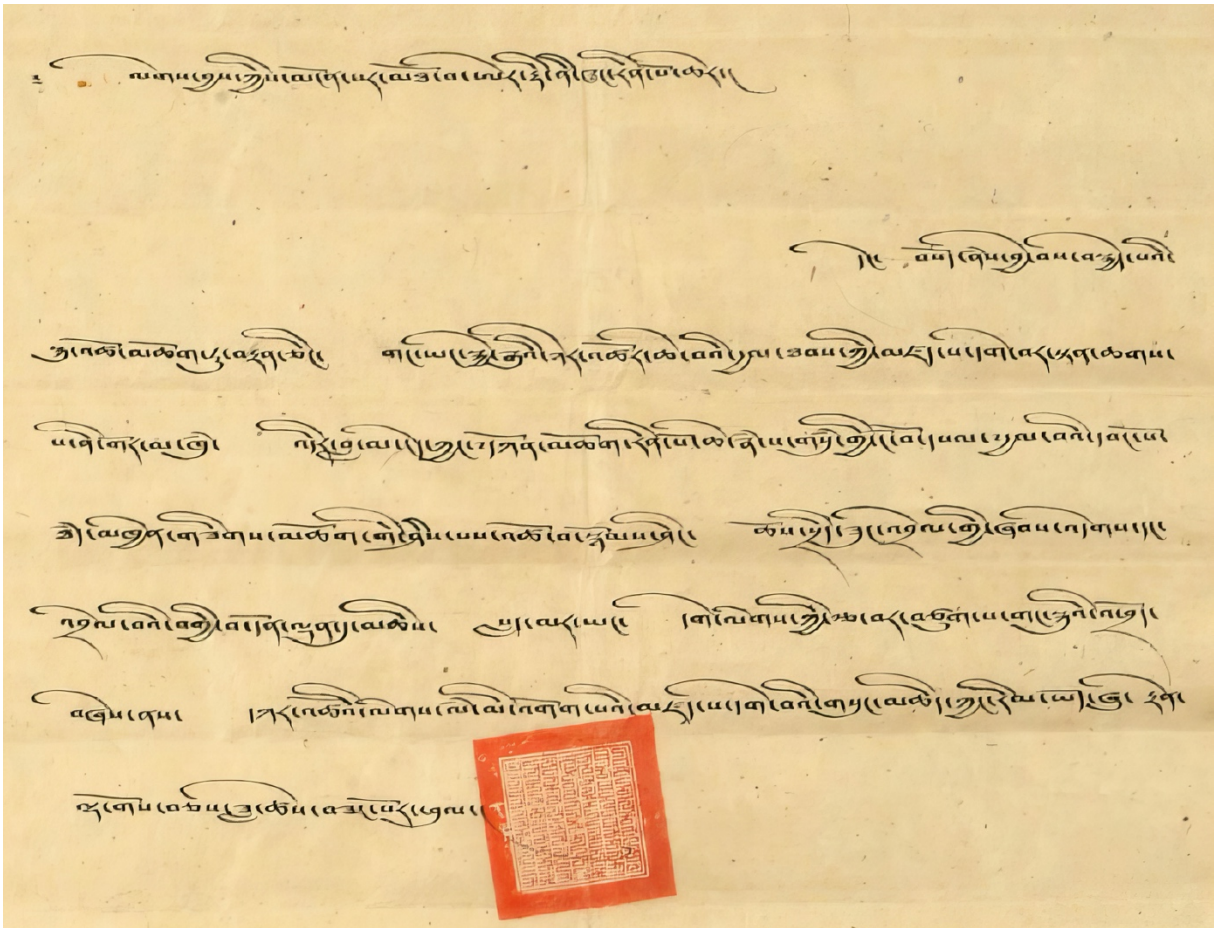
(1) *Z gnam bskos ’jam*
(2) *dbyangs gong ma chen po*
(3) *yi bkas ye shes yongs*
(4) *rdzogs bsam gtan P*
(5) *mkhan po rje drung hu P*
(6) *thug thu’i tham ga bkra P*
(7) *shis dge legs ’phel*

“Seal of the *rje drung khutukhtu*, the one who is called at the behest of the Heaven-appointed Mañjughoṣa and Most High (i.e. the emperor) Ye shes yongs rdzogs bSam gtan mkhan po. May fortune and goodness increase!”





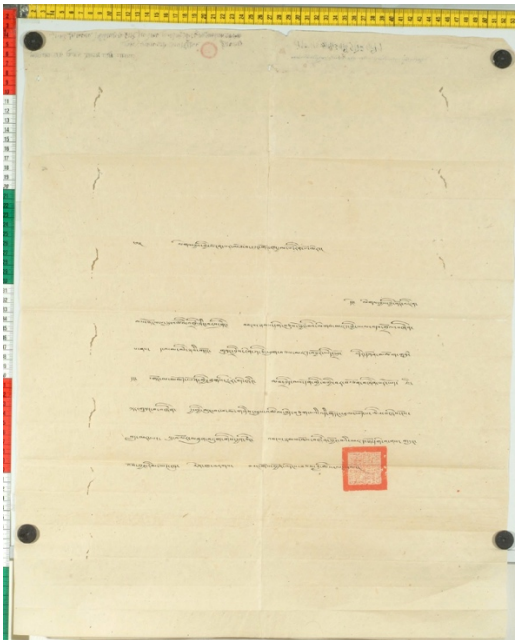
Back of the document

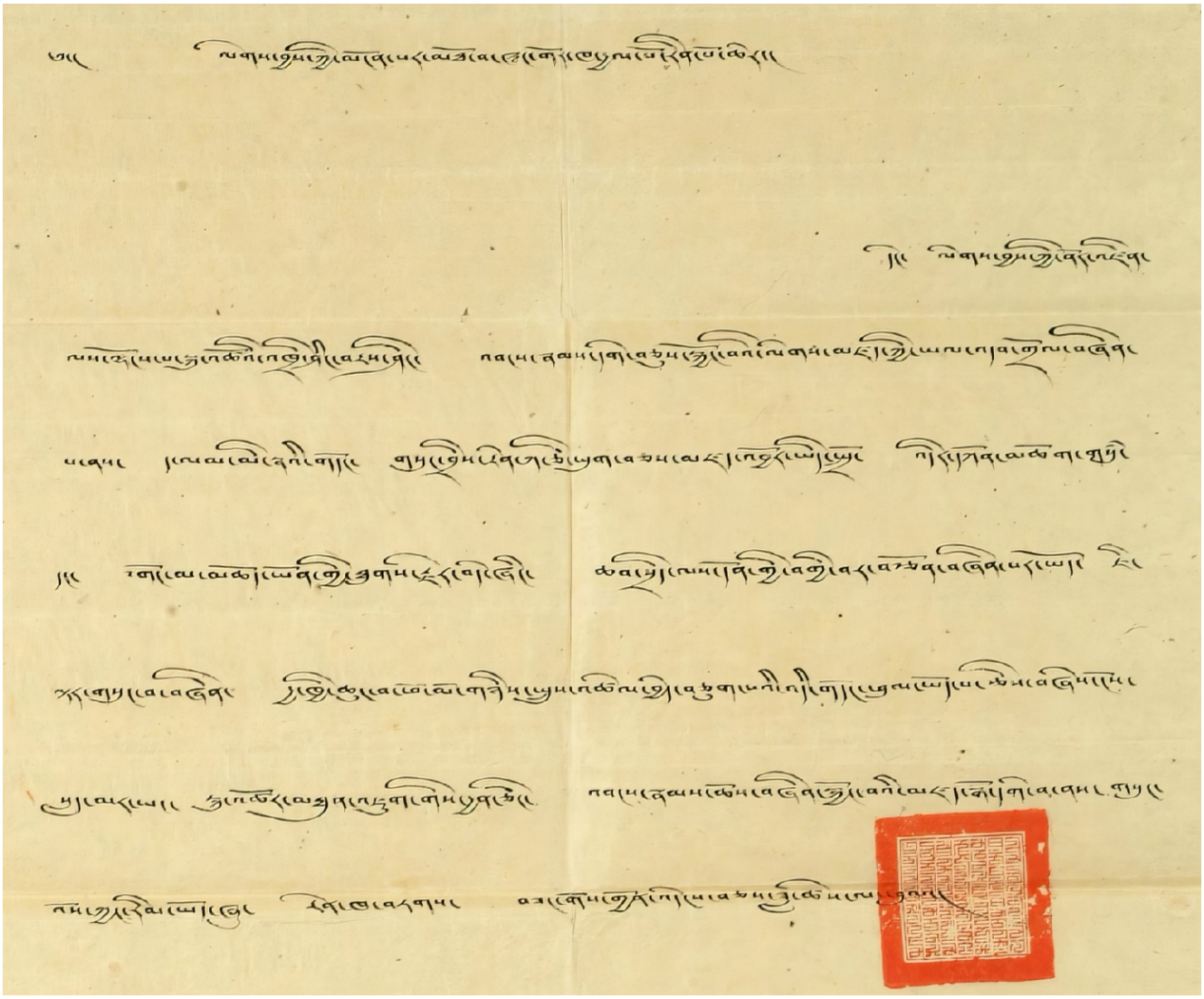


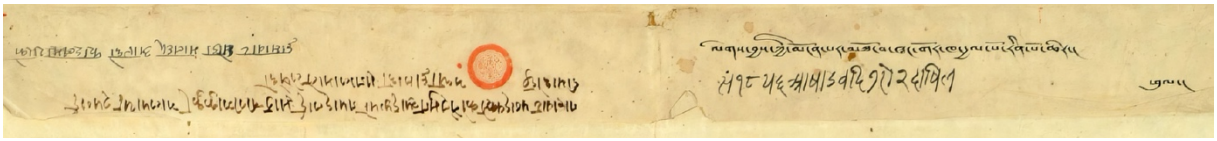
Impression from 1799 cm[351]

4.8 x 4.8 (3.5 x 3.5)

[351] KHD: 0428_KHD_S82.



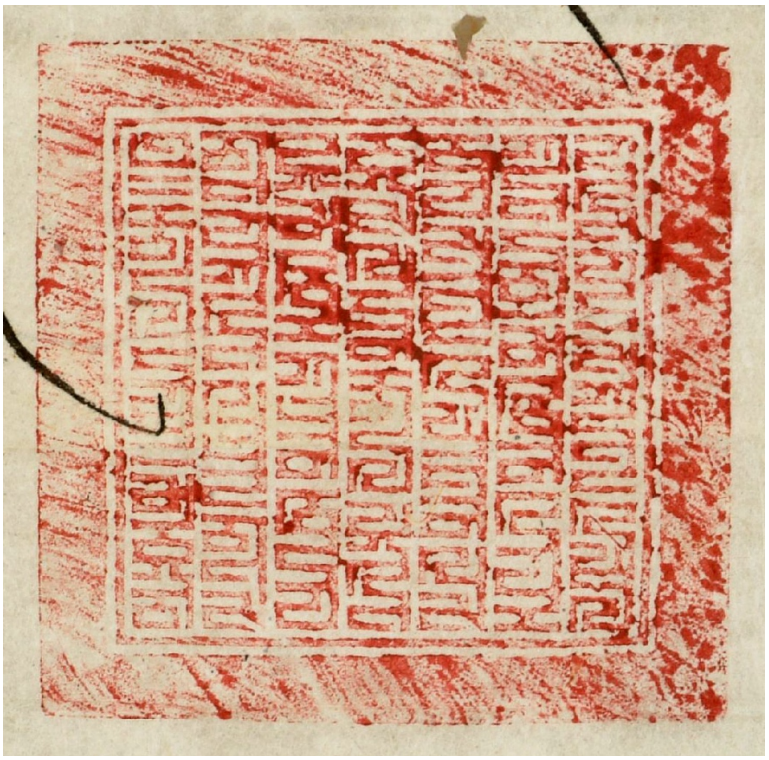




SEAL 99

Seal impression of the Grand Ministers (*blon chen*) and the Prime Minister of Tibet (*srid blon*).

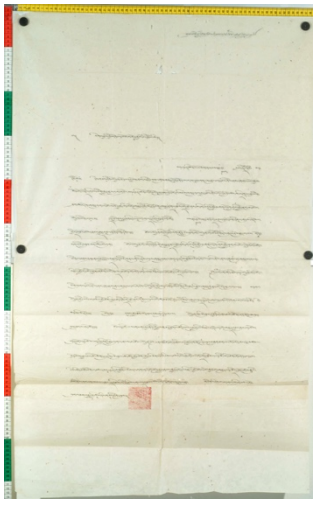
Impression from 1921 (*lcags bya*)[352]



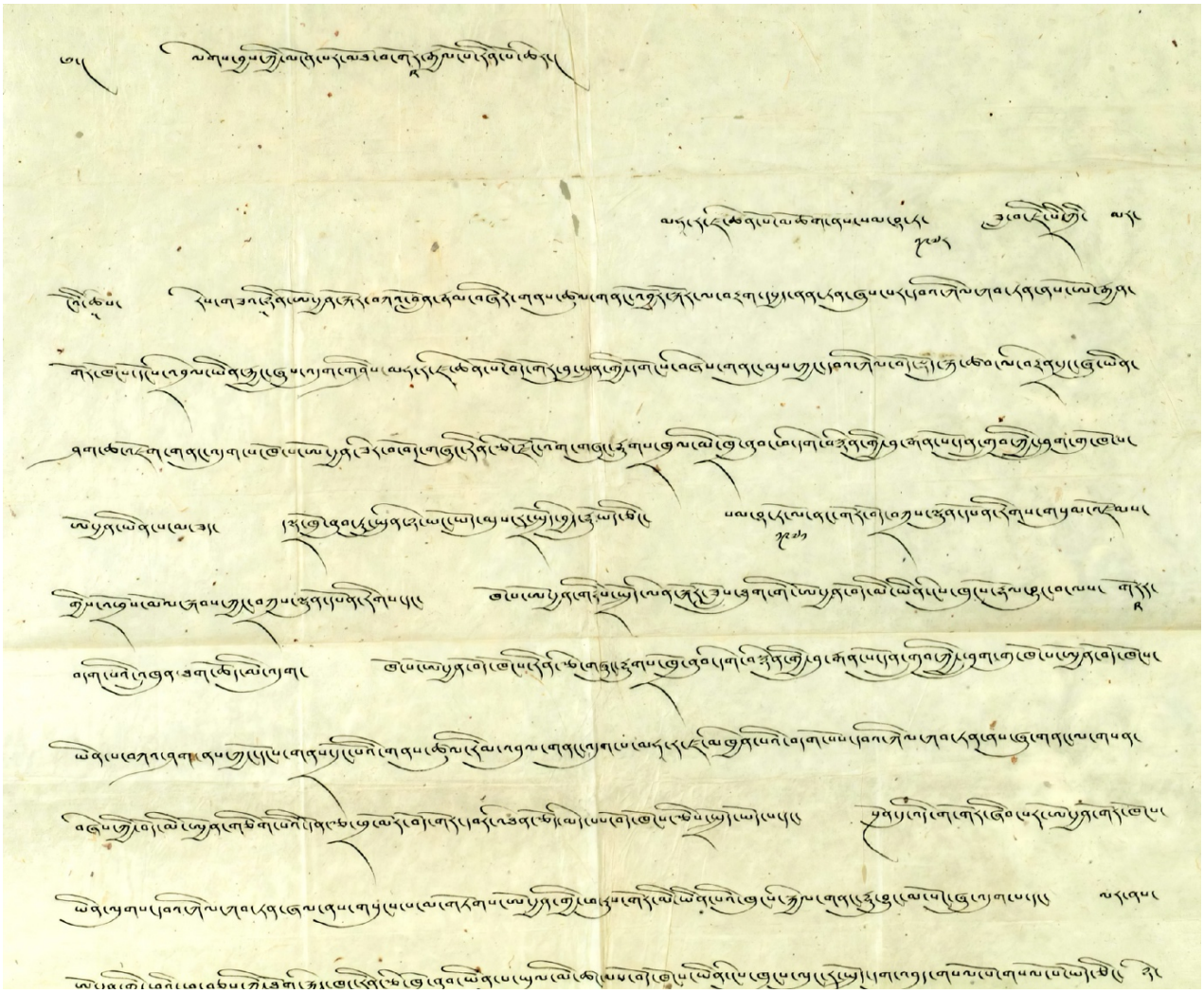
5.3 x 5.3 (4.2 x 4.1) cm

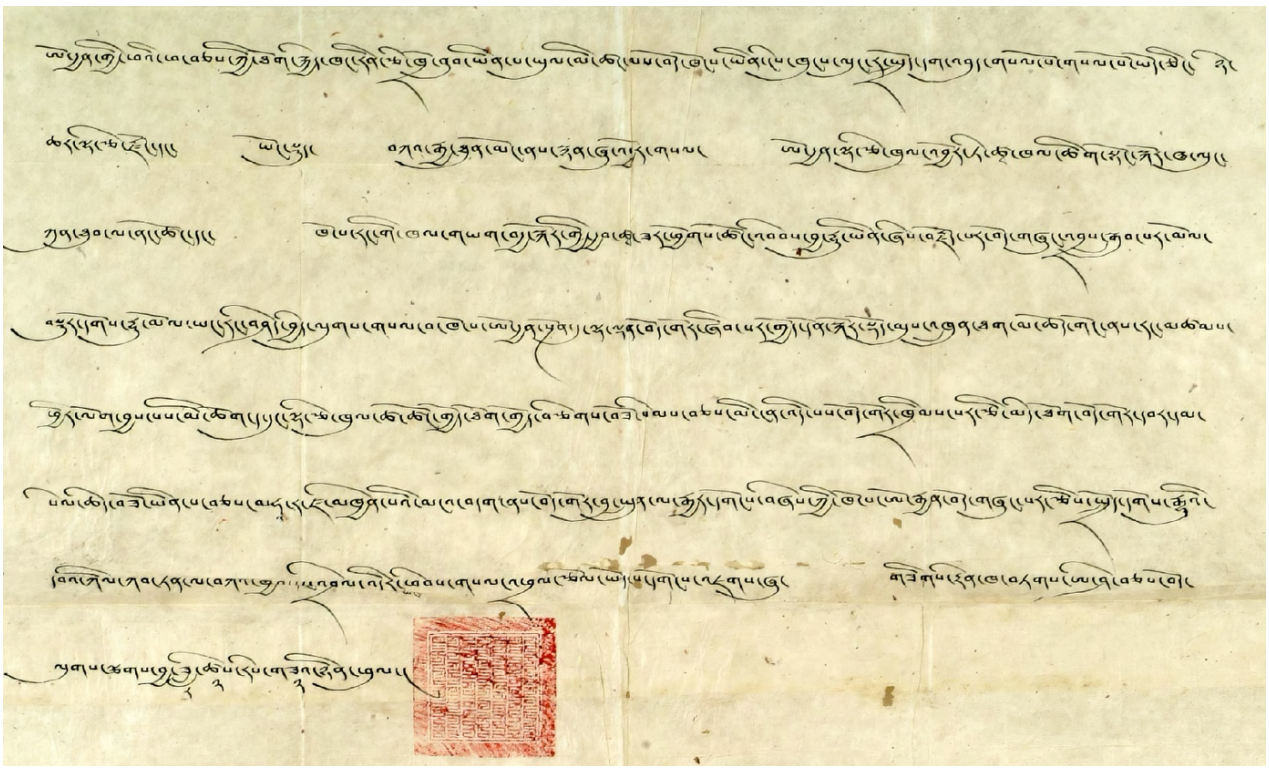
(1) *Z rgyal dbang mchog*
(2) *gi bka'i lung gis*
(3) *ngo mtshar kun khyab*
(4) *chos ldan rgyal po'i*
(5) *chab srid 'phrin las*
(6) *kyi dge mtshan 'bar*
(7) *ba'i bde skyid 'phel*

"May happiness grow through the explosion of the benefits of the political work of the one who by the order of the highest lord of the victorious ones (i.e. the Dalai Lama, is called) marvelous universal religious king!"



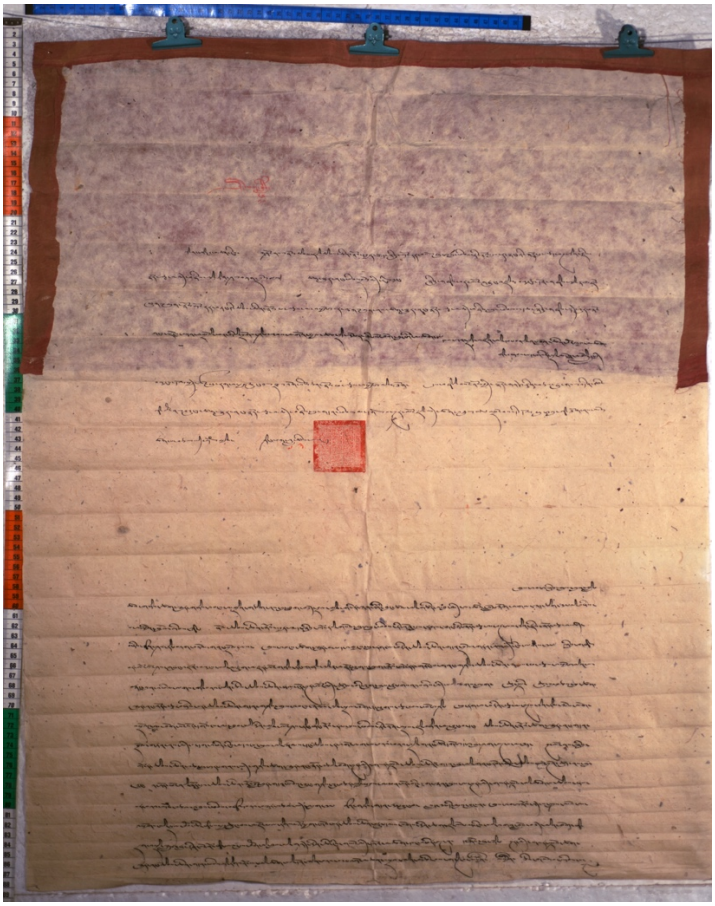
[352] KHD: 0421_KHD_S87.





Impression from 1935 (*shing phag*)[353]

5.3 x 5.3 (4.2 x 4.1) cm



Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 326—329.

[353] KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/37/4 (ID 1750).

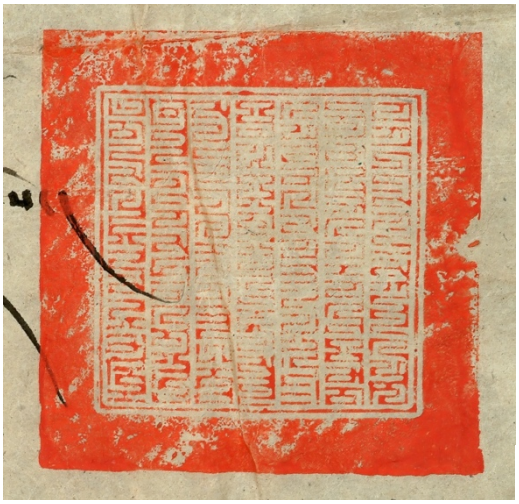
A rough tracing of the seal impression is presented in Chab spel and Ma grong’s edition of the catalog included in the *Long ba’i dmigs bu*, where the seal is named *blon chen srid dam*.[354] Furthermore, an image together with a tracing and description is contained in Dawson’s catalog.[355]

The office of the Grand Ministers (*blon chen*) was created in 1907 to support the regent in his governmental activities. At the beginning, three Grand Ministers acted jointly. However, as vacancies were not filled, finally only one Grand Minister remained. From 1926 onwards he was called Prime Minister (*srid blon*). The office existed until 1939.[356] Schuh attributed the impression from 1921 to Prime Minister bShad sgra dPal ’byor rdo rje.[357] That year, however, only the Grand Minister Zhol khang pa Don grub phun tshogs (died 1926)[358] was left. dPal ’byor rdo rje had already died in 1918[359] and his colleague Chang khyim mKhyen rab byang chub dpal bzang died two years later.[360] The second impression falls within the term of office of Prime Minister Glang mdun Kun dga’ dbang phyug (r. 1926–1939).[361]

SEAL 100

Seal impression of the second Rwa sgreng regent Thub bstan ’jam dpal ye shes rgyal mtshan (1912–1947, r. 1934–1941).

Impression from 1939 (*sa yos*)[362]



5.7 x 5.7 (4.3 x 4.3) cm

[354] Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 75.

[355] Dawson 1997, 18.

[356] Petech 1973, 8.

[357] Schuh 2018, 330.

[358] Dungkar 2370. Other authors give 1925 as the year of his death, for example Petech 1973, 143, 230.

[359] Dungkar 2369; Yangzom 56. Please note that Petech 1973, 230, confuses bShad sgra dBang phyug rgyal po with bShad sgra dPal ’byor rdo rje.

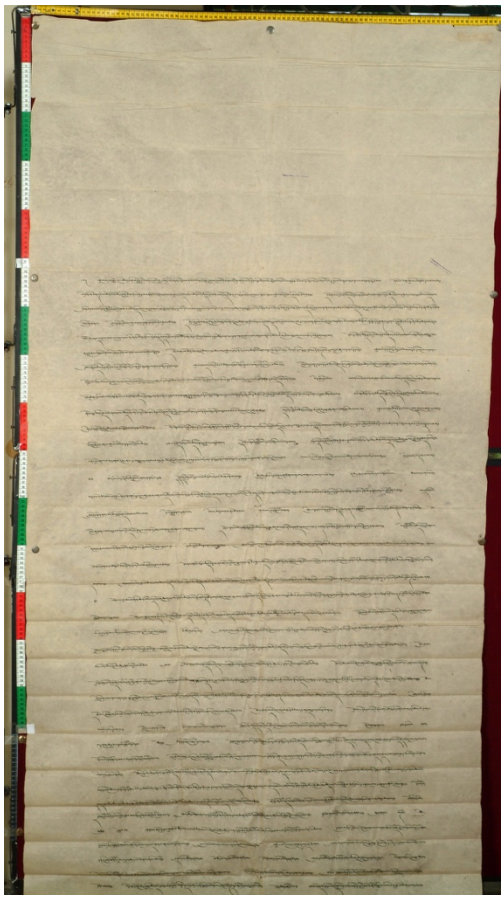
[360] Petech 1973, 109.

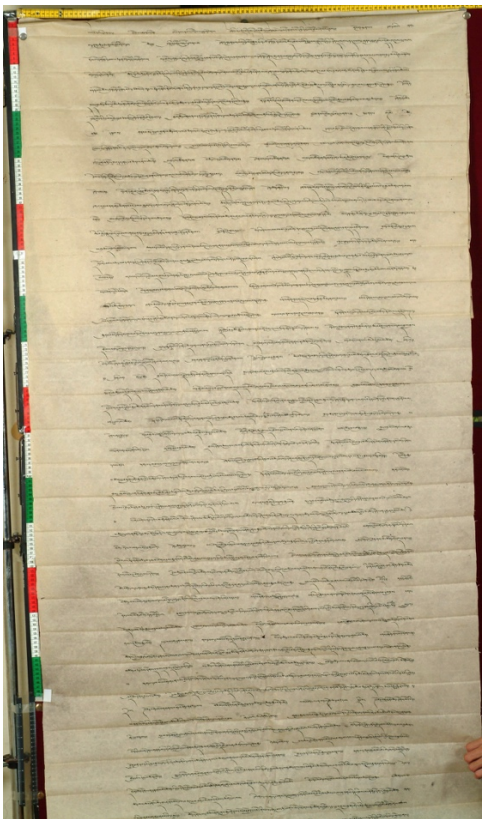
[361] Petech 1973, 24–25. Schuh (2018, 363) attributes the seal impression to the second Rwa sgreng regent (r. 1934–1941). However, the seal impression is at the end of a reply to a request addressed jointly to the Rwa sgreng regent and the chief minister, here addressed as *dpal ldan srid ’dzin mi dbang bka’i nang blon chen po*.

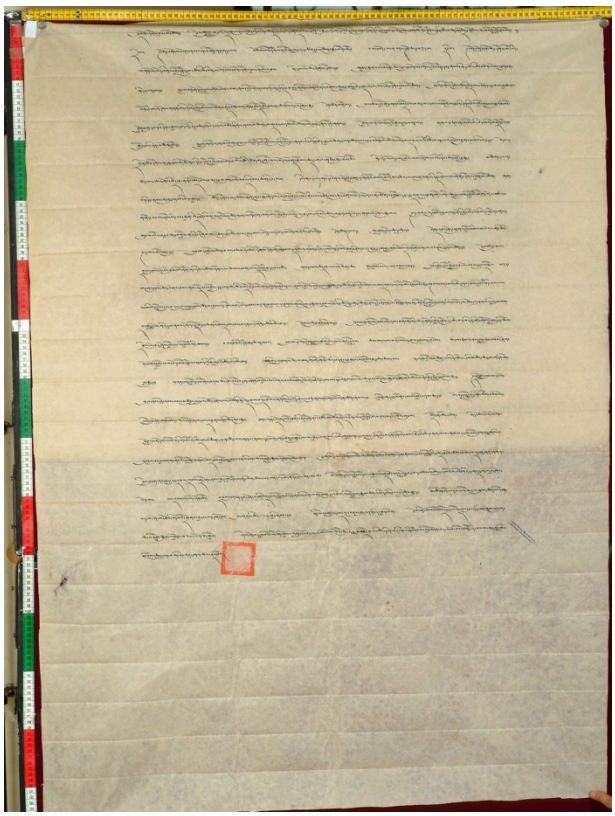
[362] LTWA: 0939_LTWA_151.

(1) *Z gangs ljongs ngo mtshar*
(2) *zhing gi bstan 'gro'i*
(3) *spyi dpal ra {rwa} sgreng a chi*
(4) *thu ho thog thu'i chos srid*
(5) *'phrin las bzang po'i//*
(6) *dge mtshan 'bar ba'i tham ga*
(7) *bkra shis bde skyid 'phel*

"Seal by which the benefits of the good religious and political work of Rwa sgreng *a chi thu ho thog thu*, the general splendor of the (Buddhist) teachings and beings of the land of snows, the marvelous field, explode. May fortune and happiness increase!"

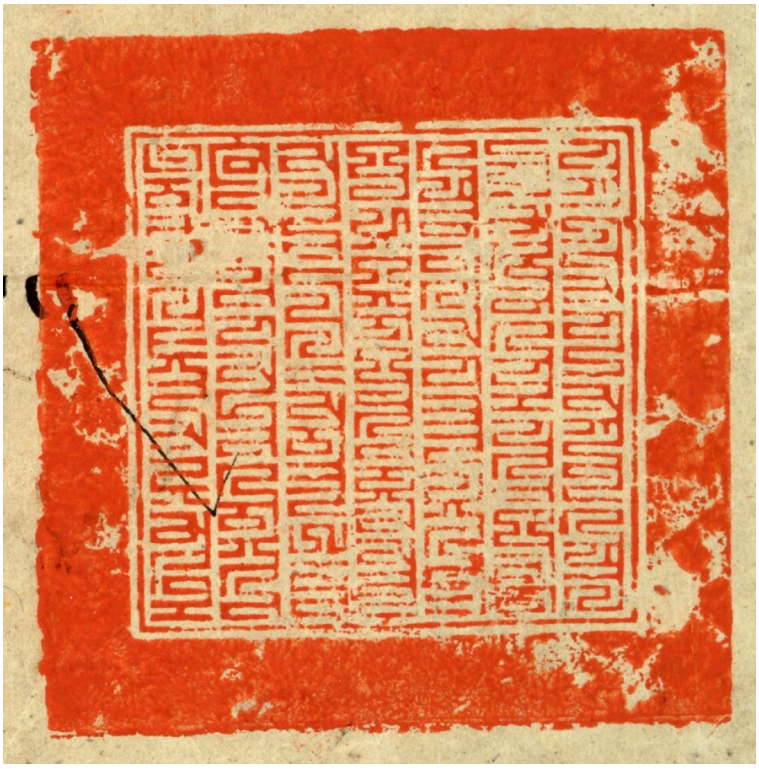




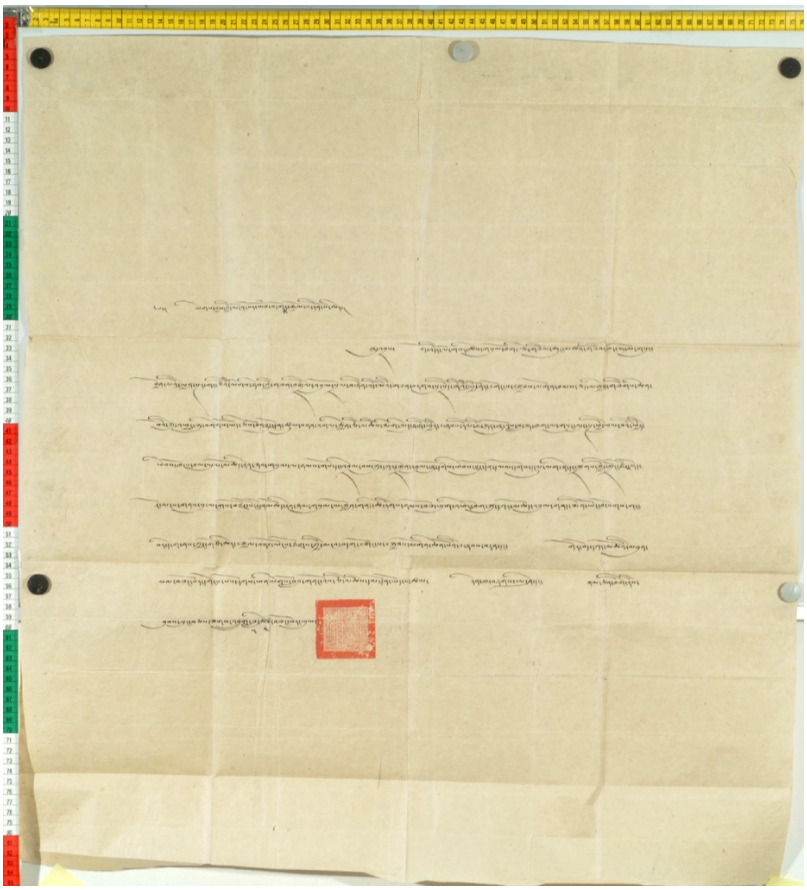


Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 330—336.

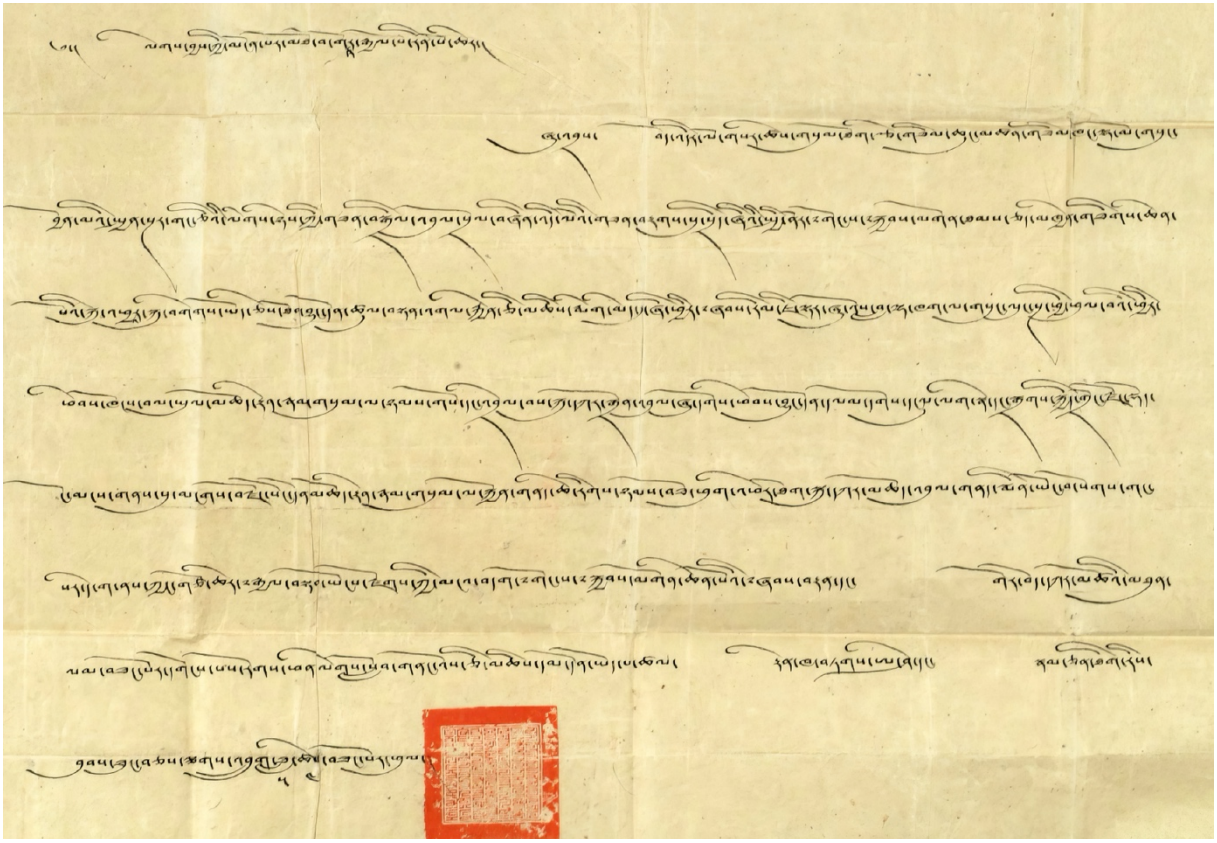
Impression from 1940 (*lcags ’brug*)[363]



5.7 x 5.7 (4.3 x 4.3) cm



[363] KHD: 0455_KHD_S108.



SEAL 101

Seal of the sTag brag regent Ngag dbang gsung rab grub thob bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1874–1952, r. 1941–1950).

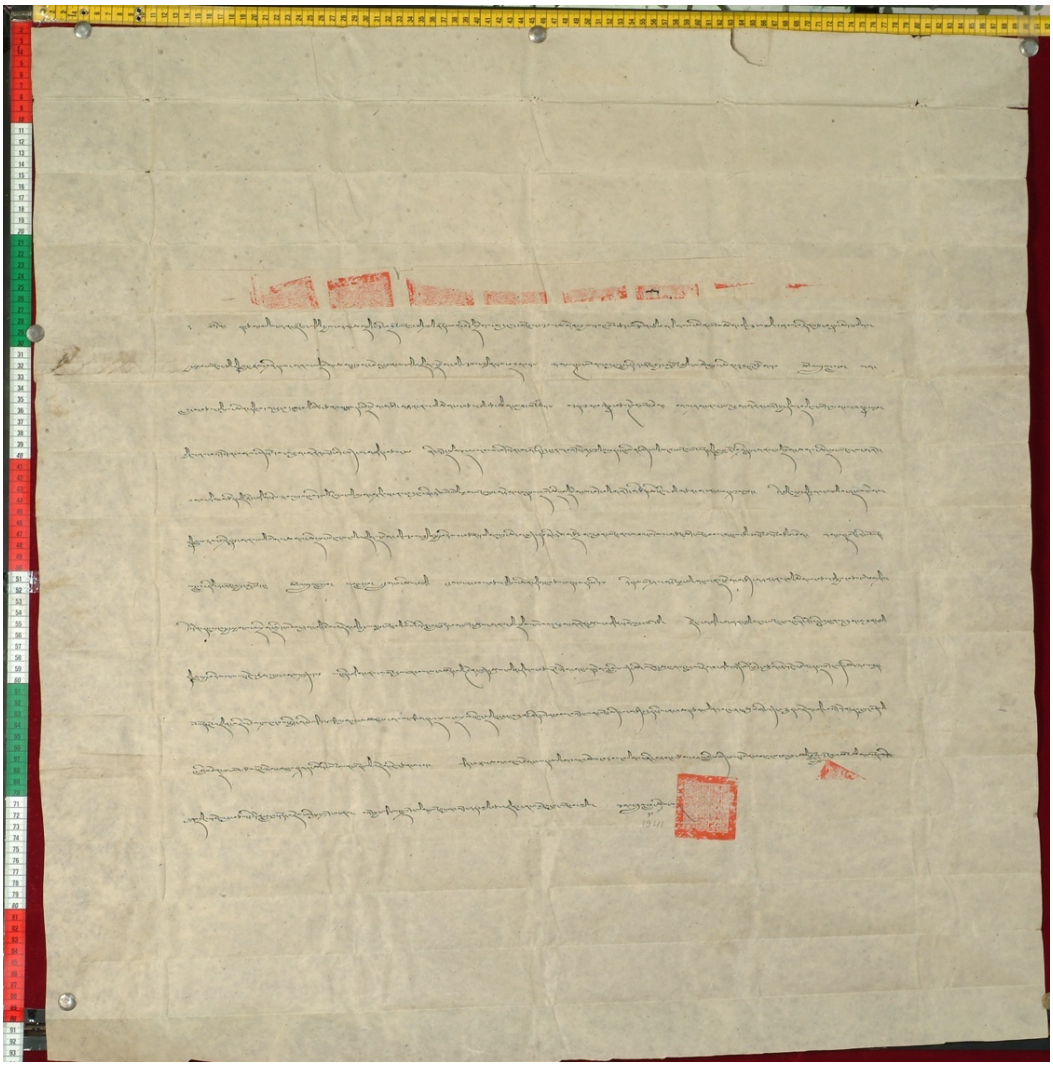
Impression from 1941 (*lcags brul*)[364]

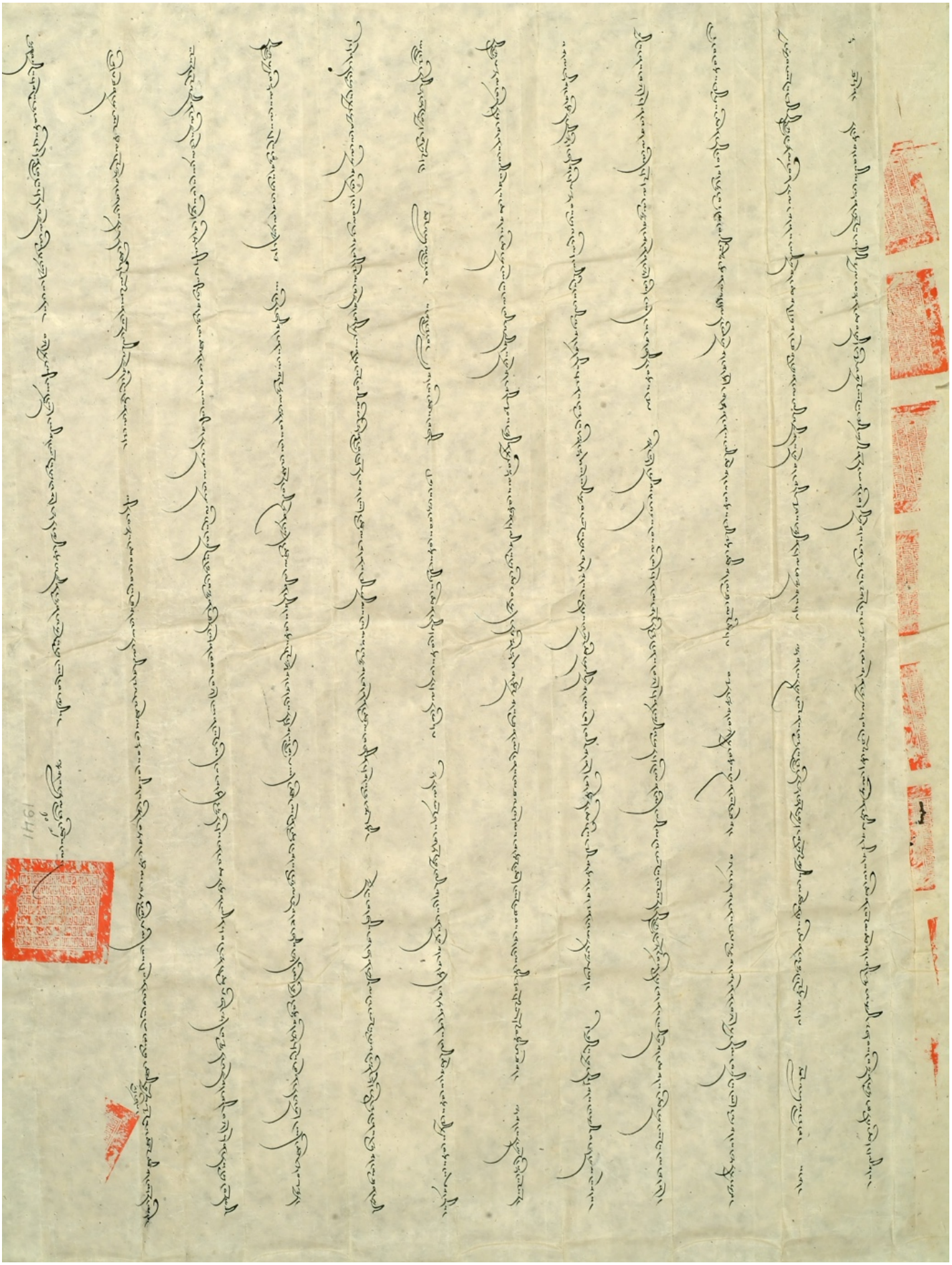
5.5 x 5.6 (4.1 x 4.3) cm

[364] LTWA: 1065_LTWA_276.

(1) *Z gangs ljongs bstan*
(2) *’gro’i phan bde’i dpal*
(3) *mgon yongs ’dzin stag*
(4) *brag paṇ ḍi ta yi chos srid*
(5) *’phrin las bzang po’i dge*
(6) *mtshan mchog tu ’bar ba’i tham*
(7) *ga bkra shis bde skyid ’phel*

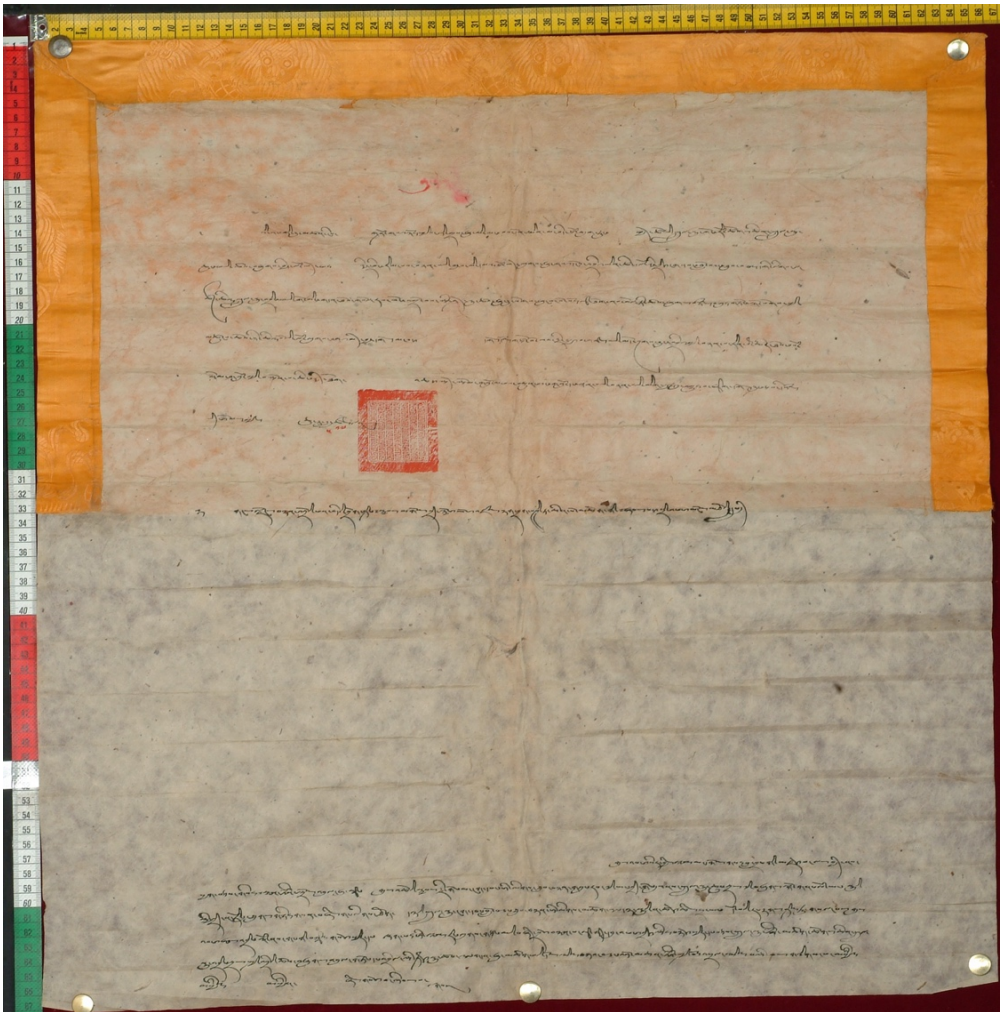
“Seal by which the benefits of the good religious and political work of *yongs ’dzin* sTag brag *paṇḍita*, the glorious protector of the (Buddhist) teachings and beings of the land of snows, explode. May fortune and happiness increase!”





Impression from 1942 (*chu rta*)[365]

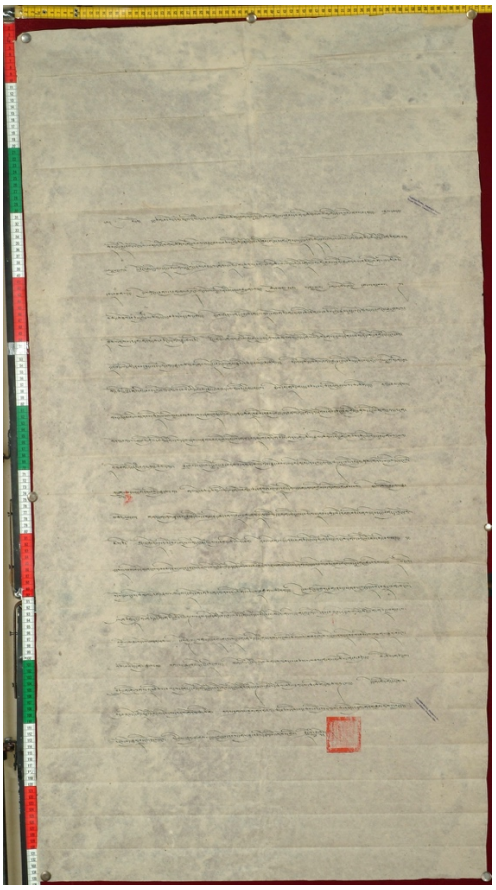
5.6 x 5.8 (4.1 x 4.2) cm



[365] LTWA: 1390_LTWA_632.

Impression from 1944 (*shing spre*)[366]

5.5 x 5.6 (4.1 x 4.2) cm



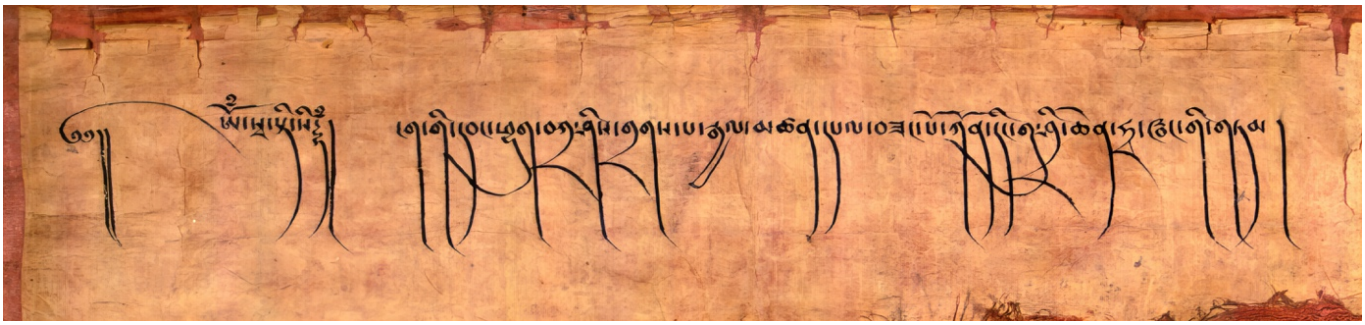
Enlarged images of the text can be found in the appendix 1, pp. 337—339.
For tracings of the seal impression see Schuh 1981, 285, and Chab spel and Ma grong 1991, 83. A seal impression is depicted in Ou Chaogui and Qi Mei, 1991, 87. However, the added explanation does not seem to match the illustration.

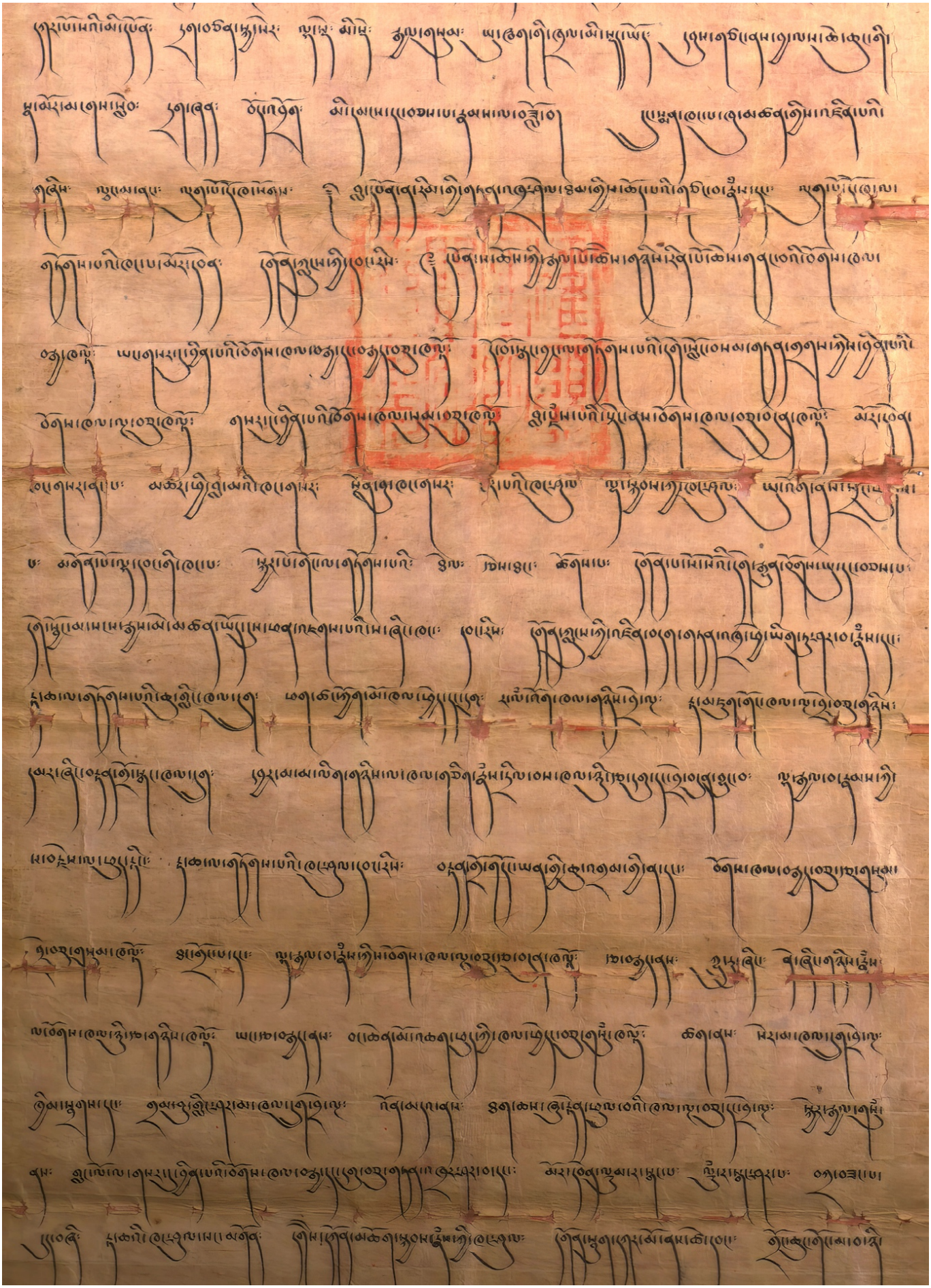
[366] LTWA: 0949_LTWA_161.

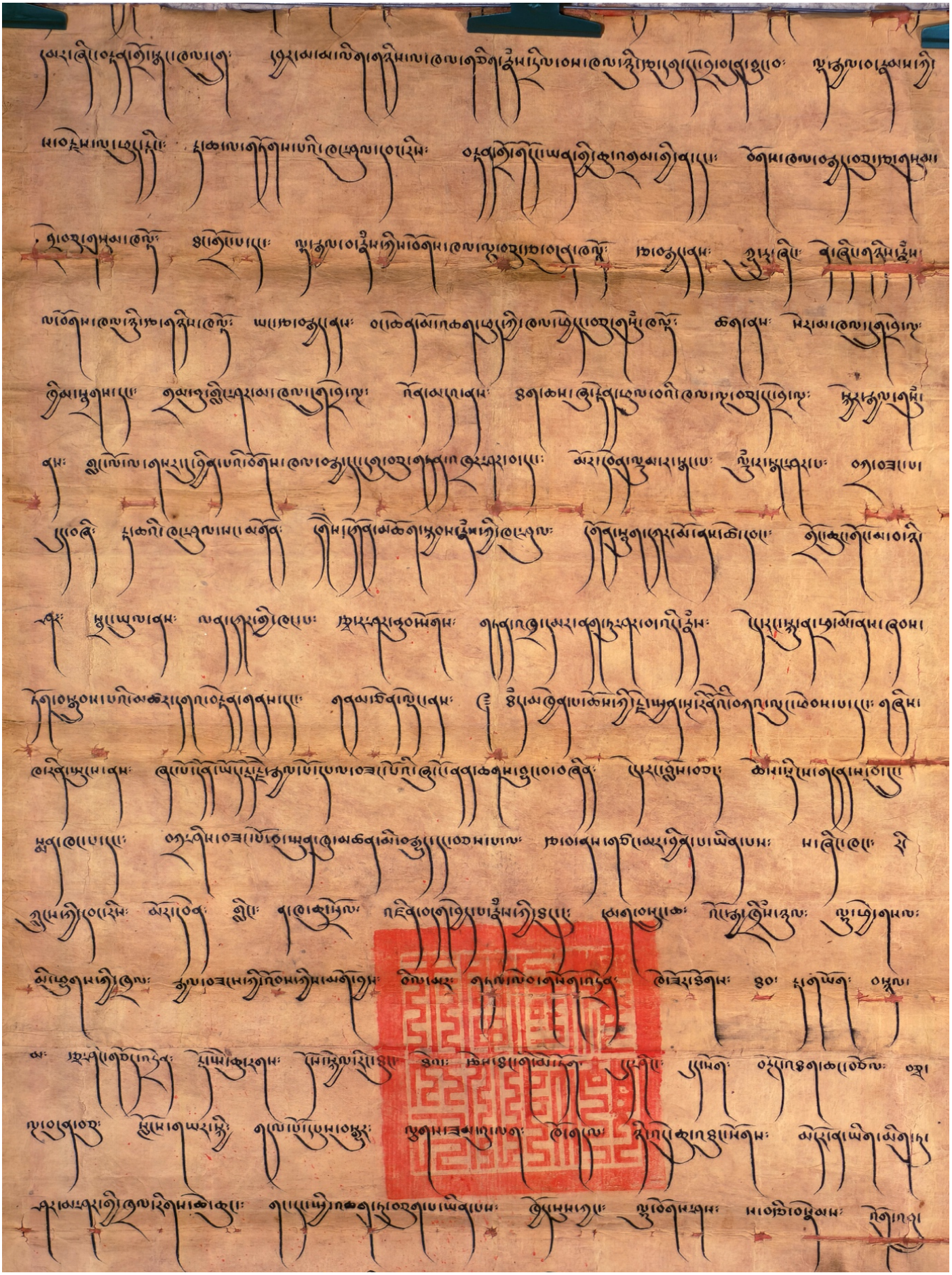
Appendix 1: Images of Longer Documents

Document referring to SEAL 7

KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/1/3 (ID 989)

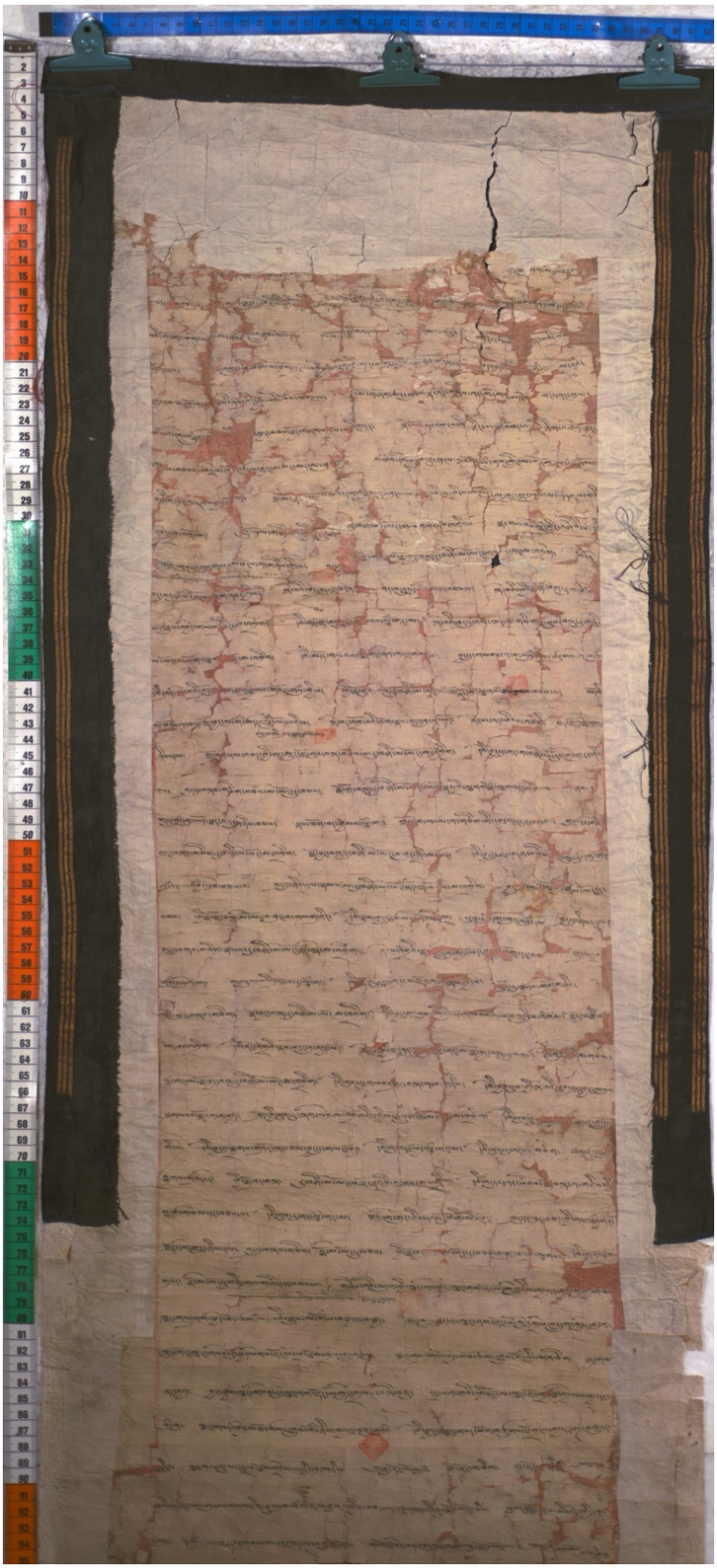


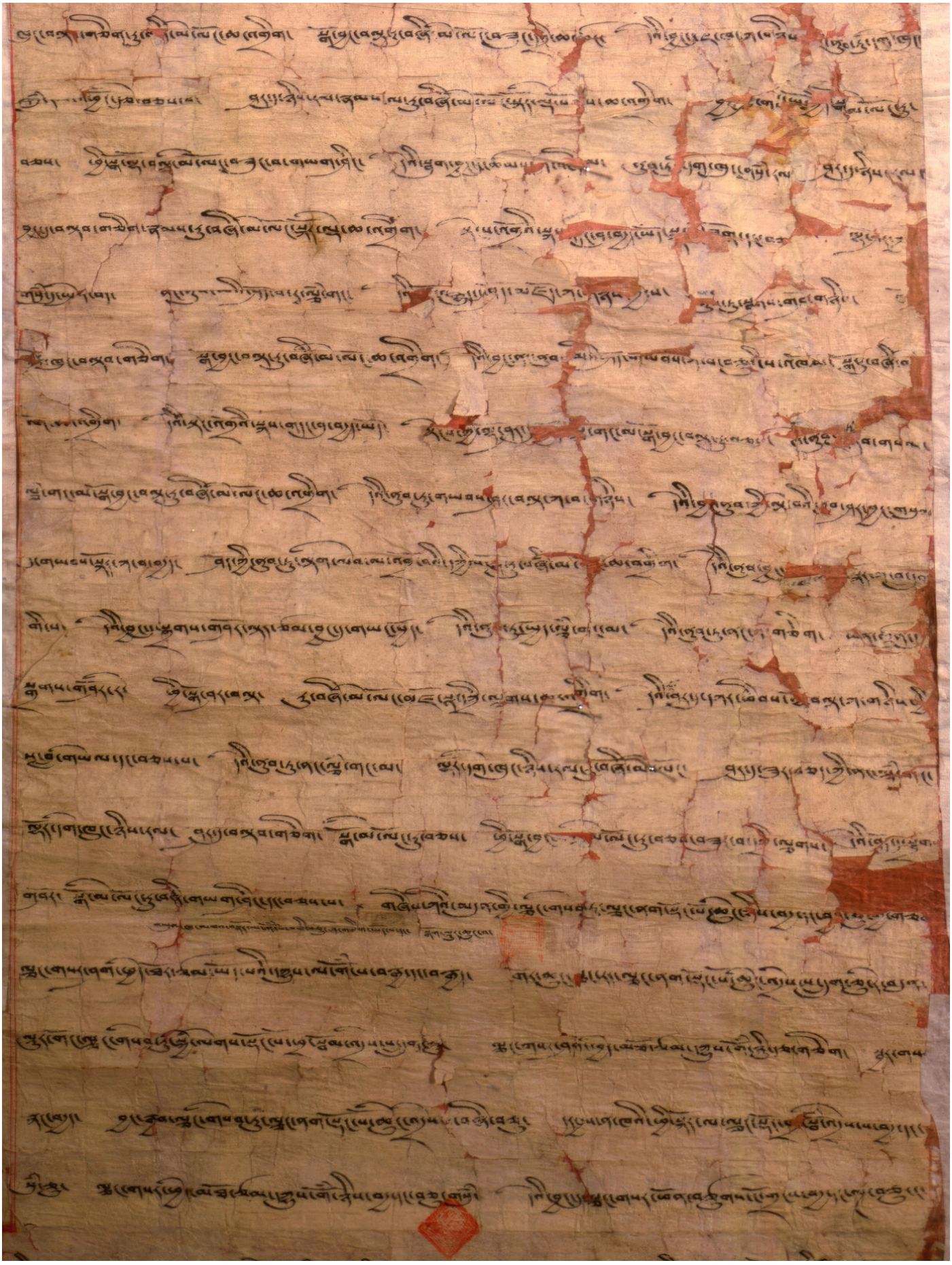


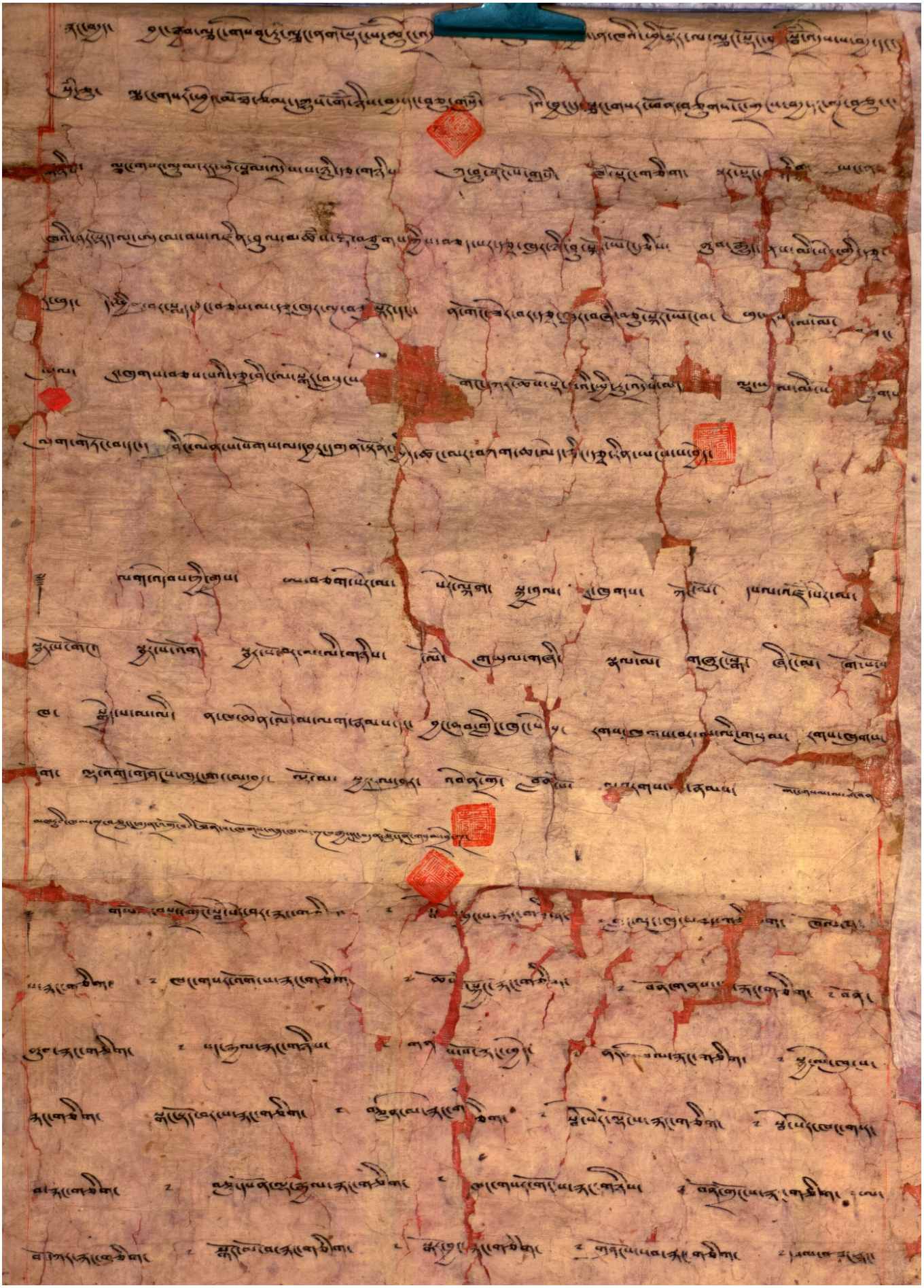


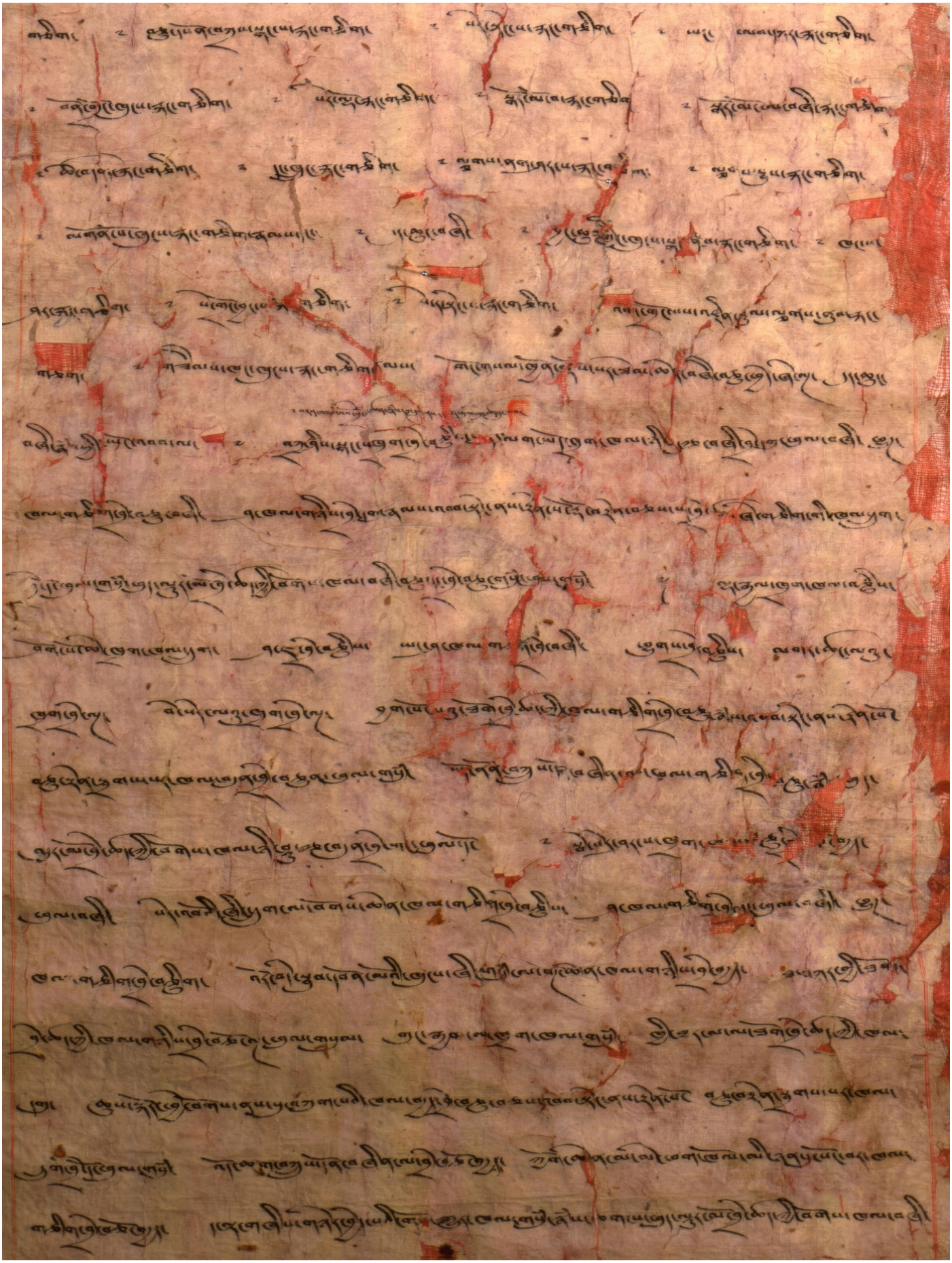
Document referring to SEAL 34

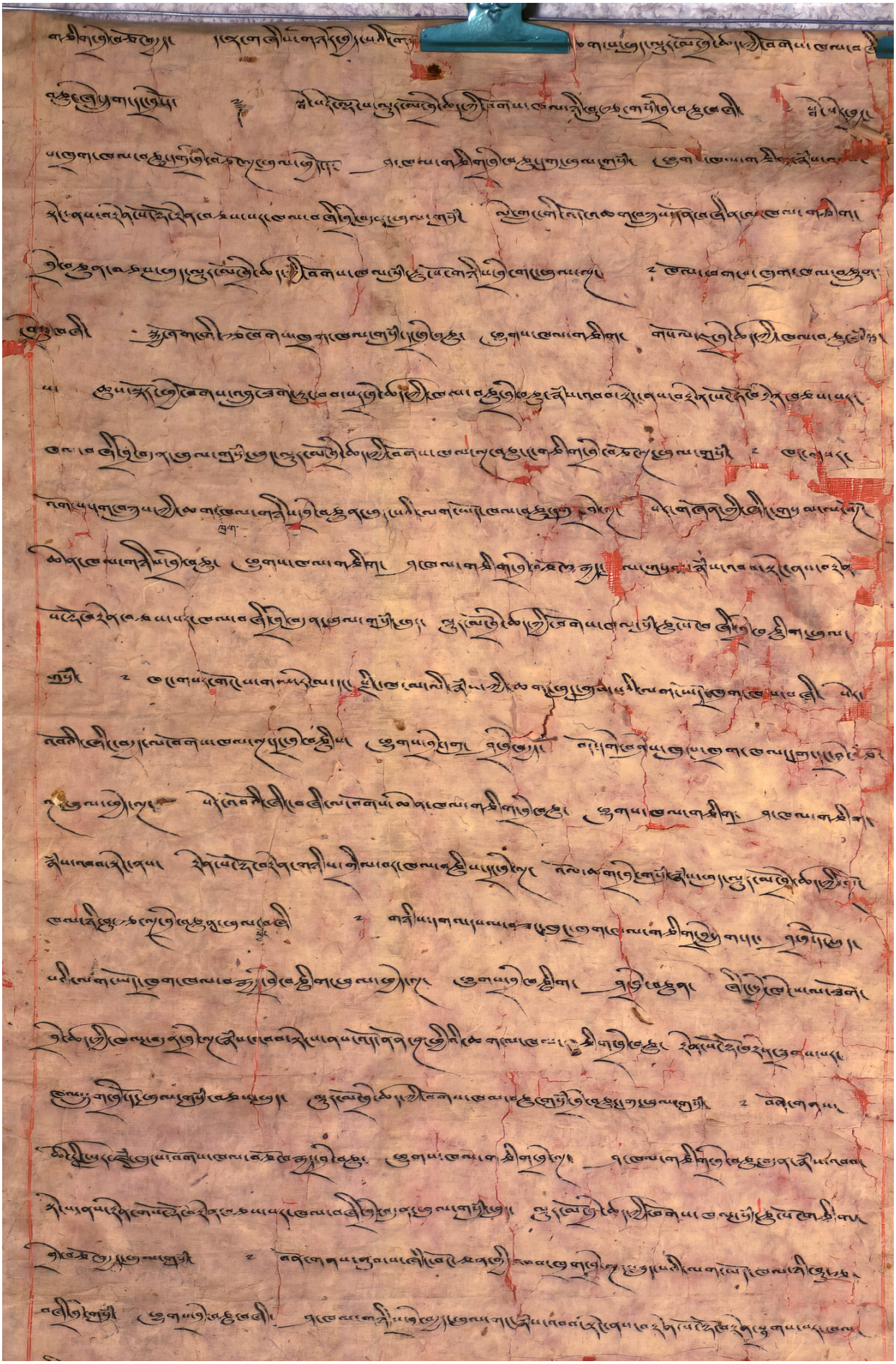
KDL: 012 2-1/#/29/4/4 (ID 1325)

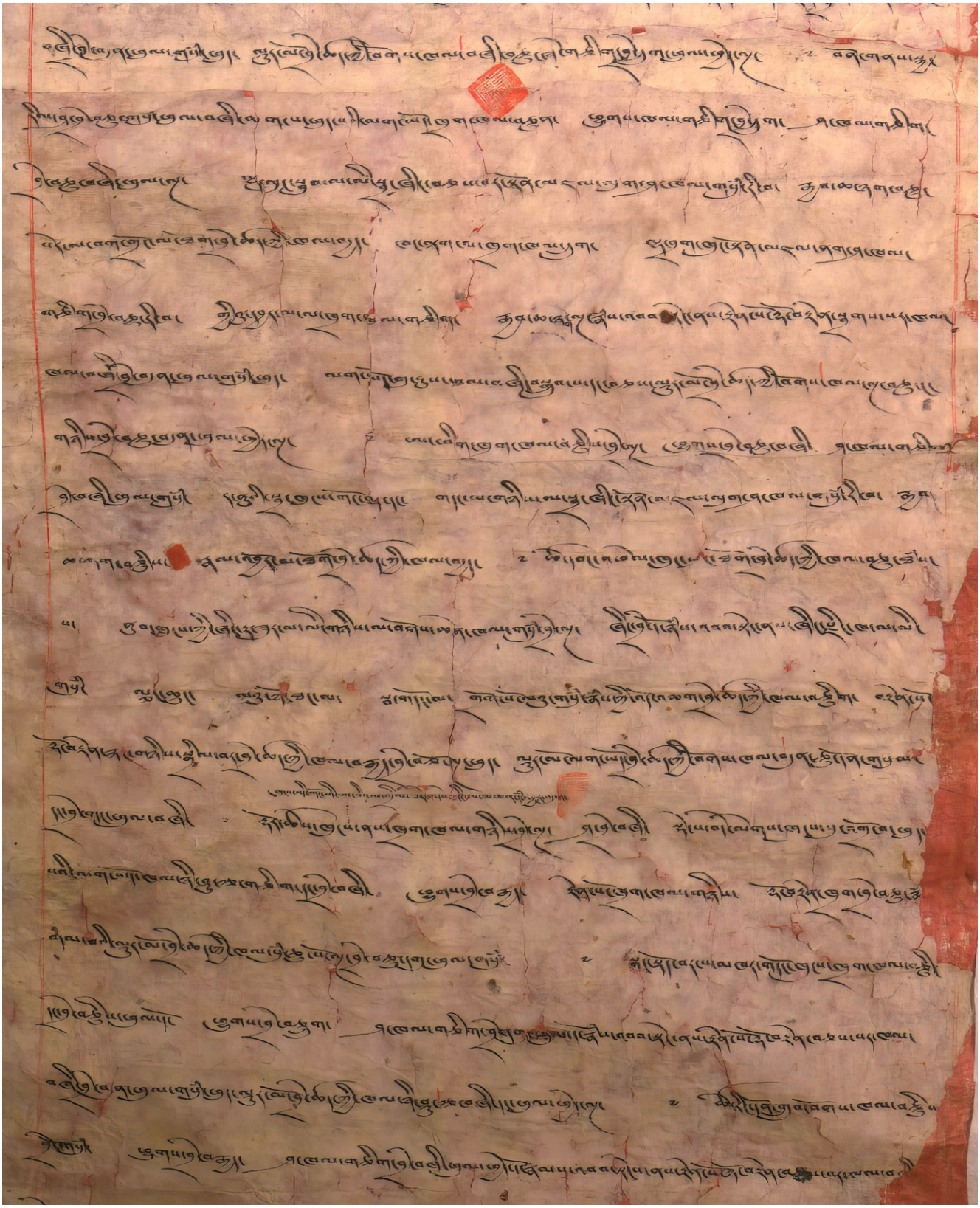


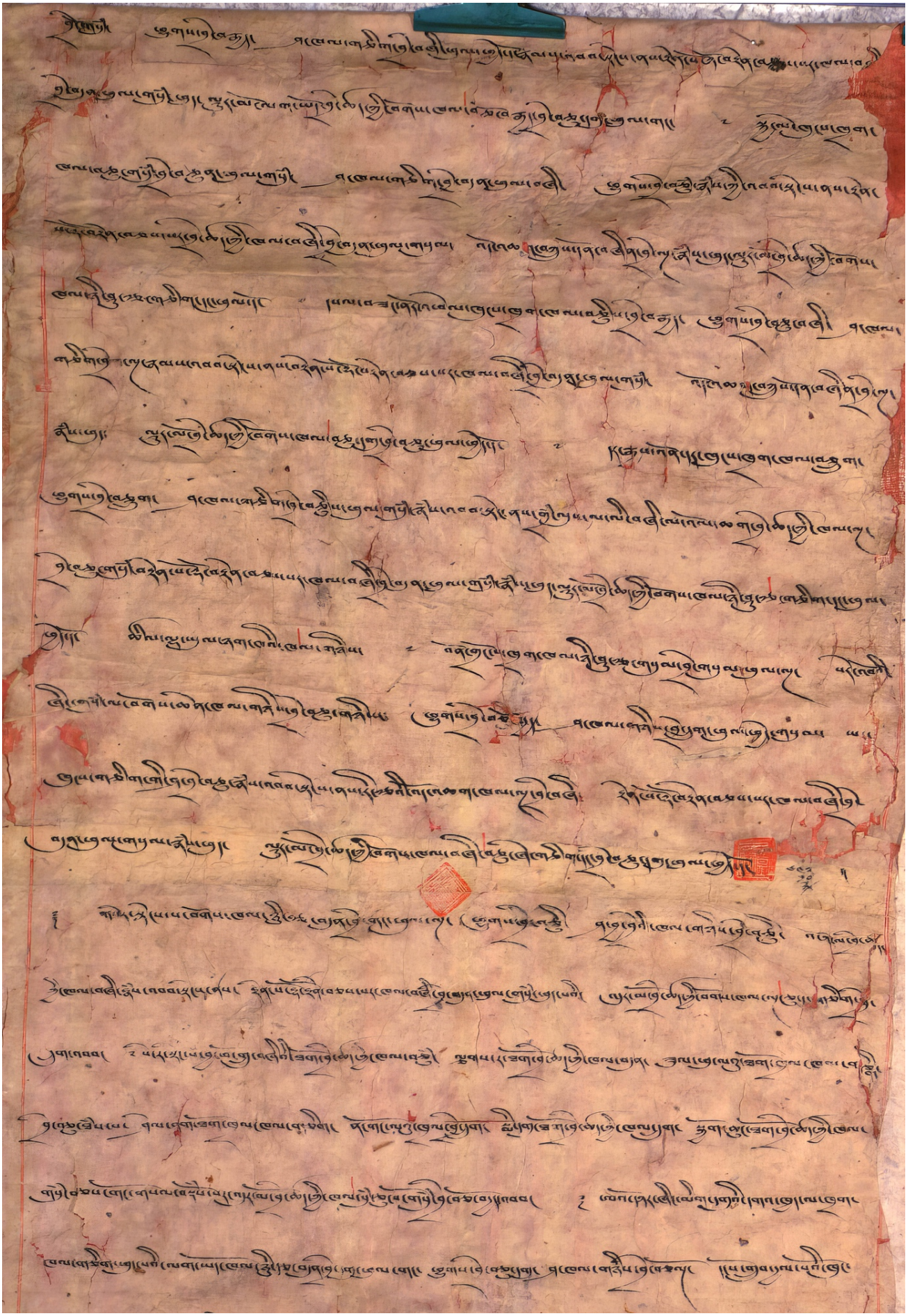


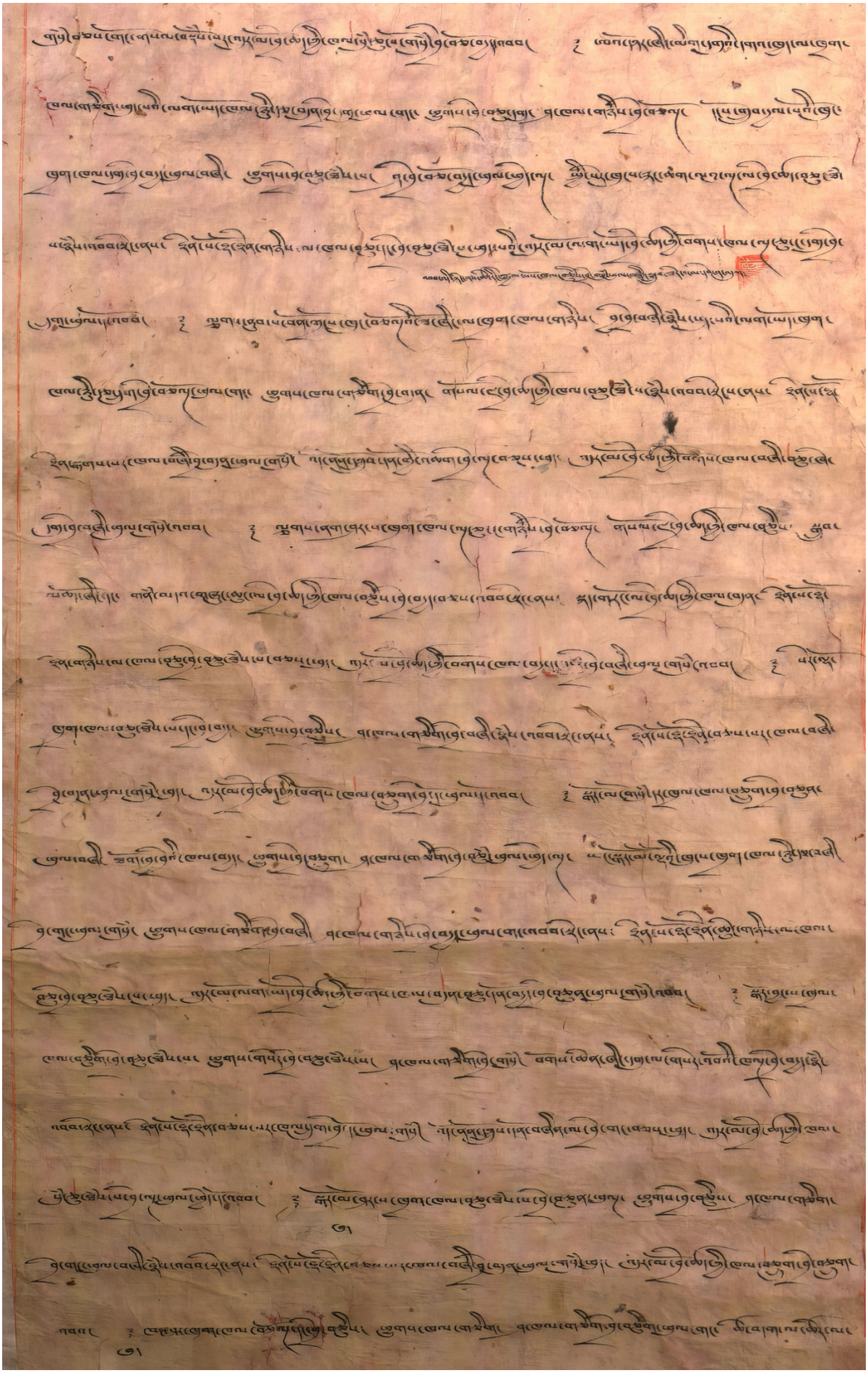


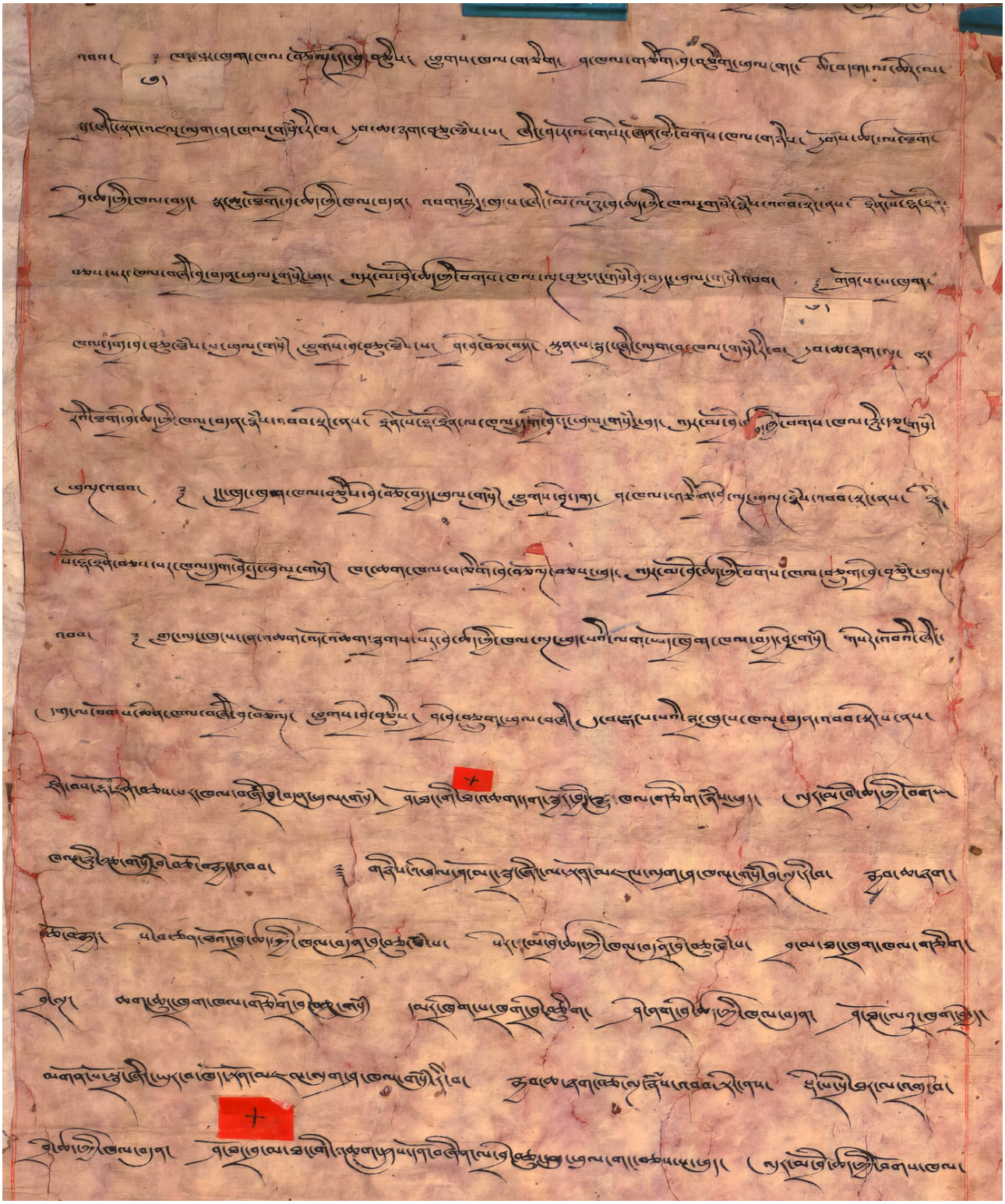


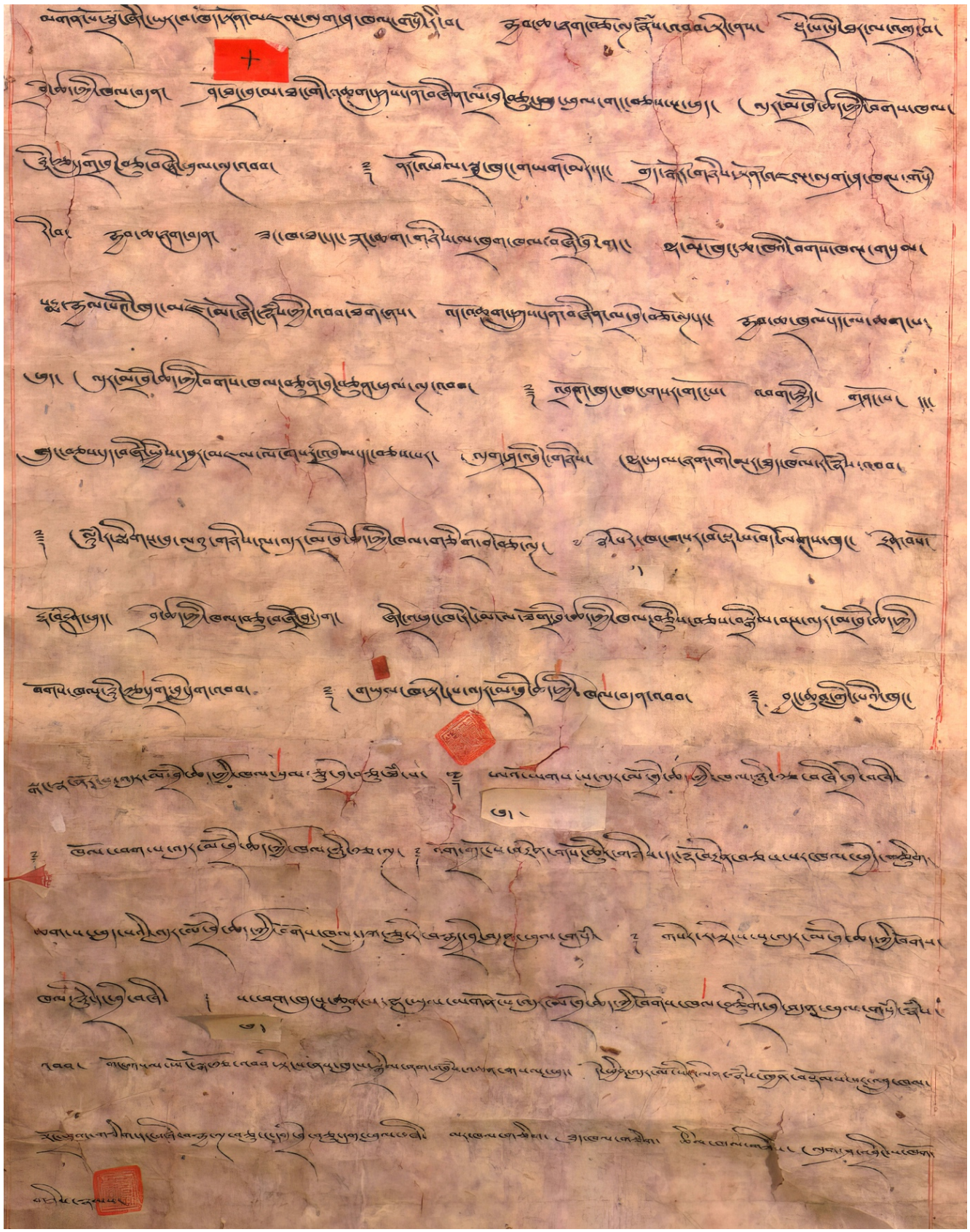


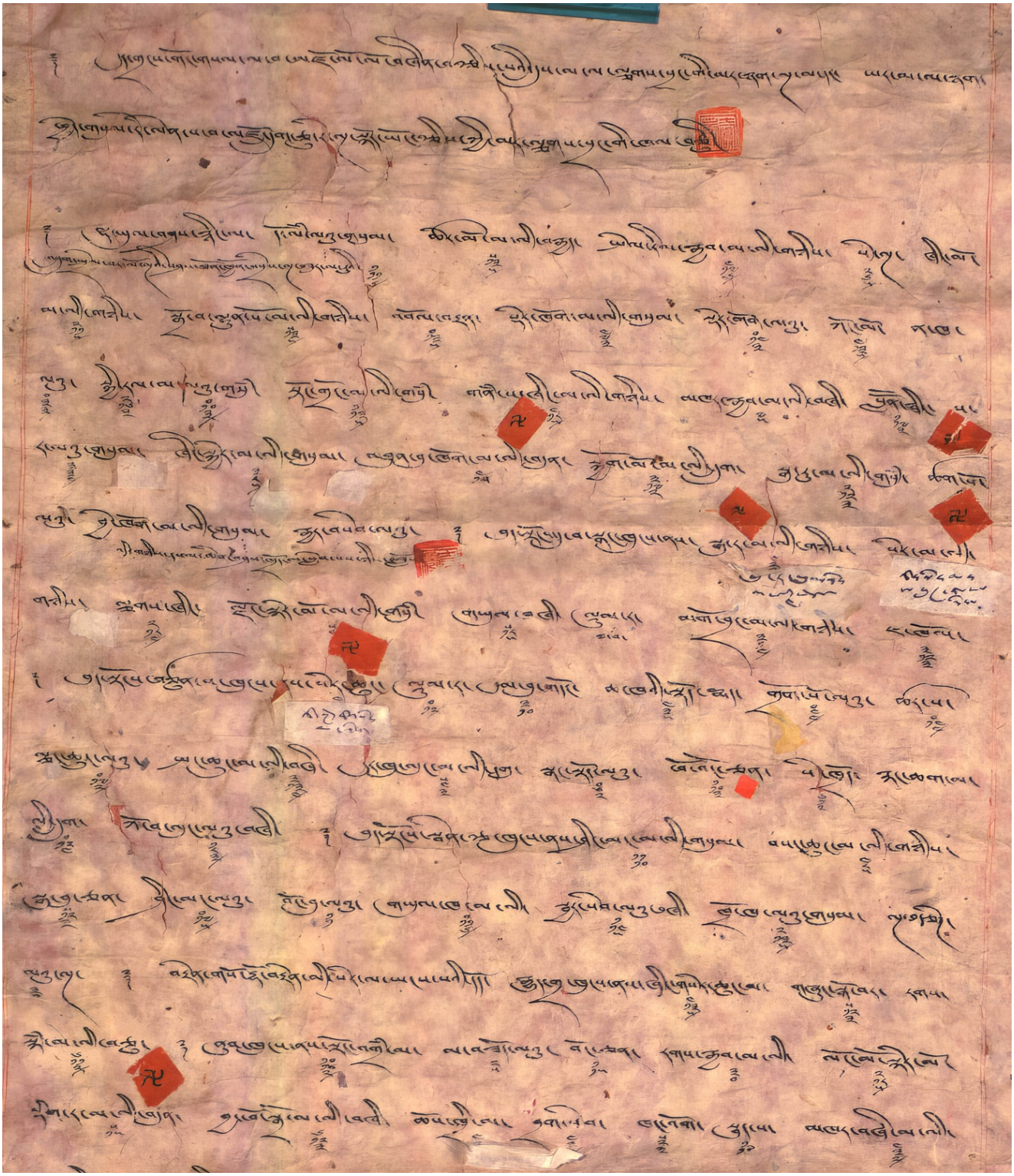


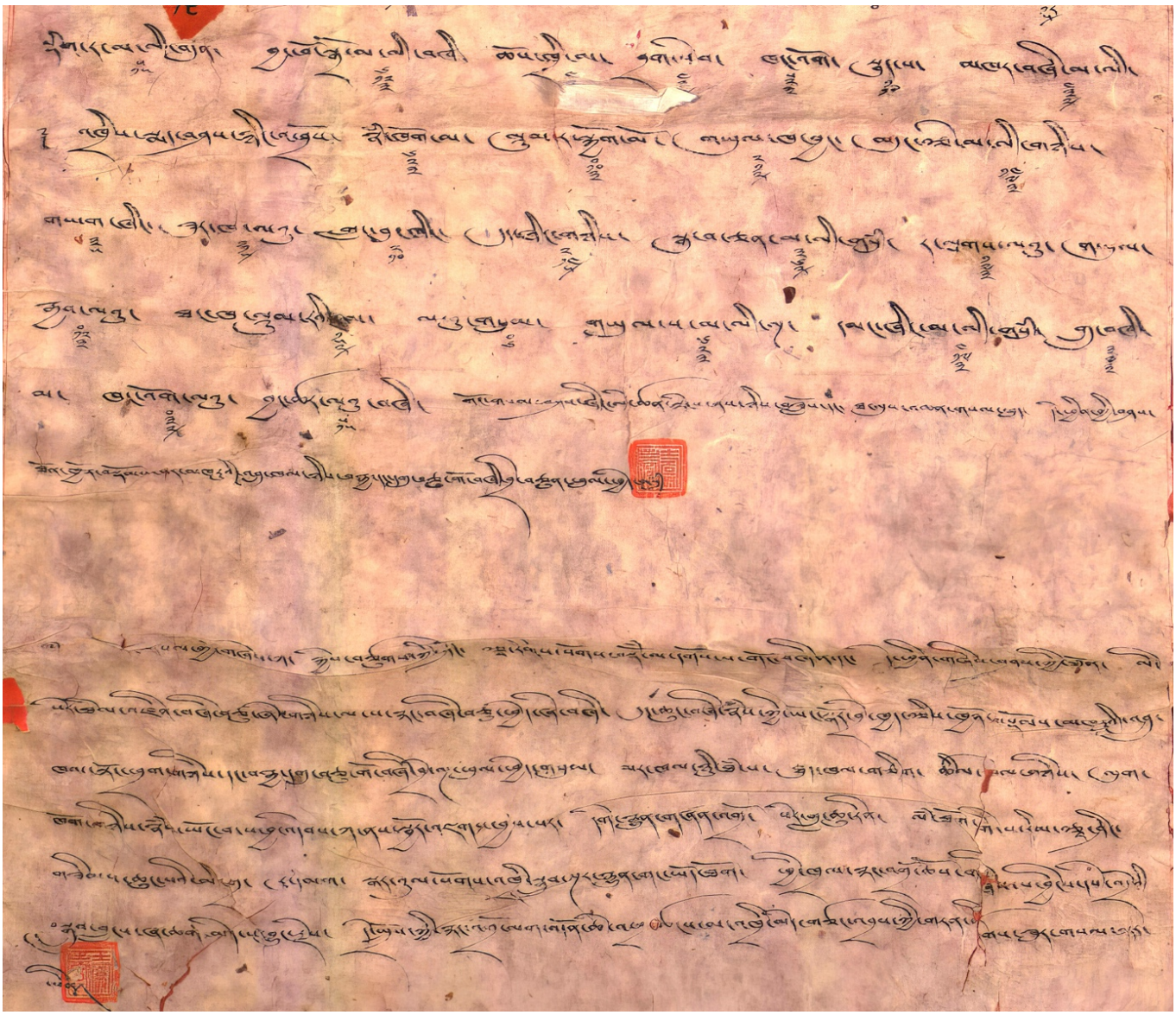






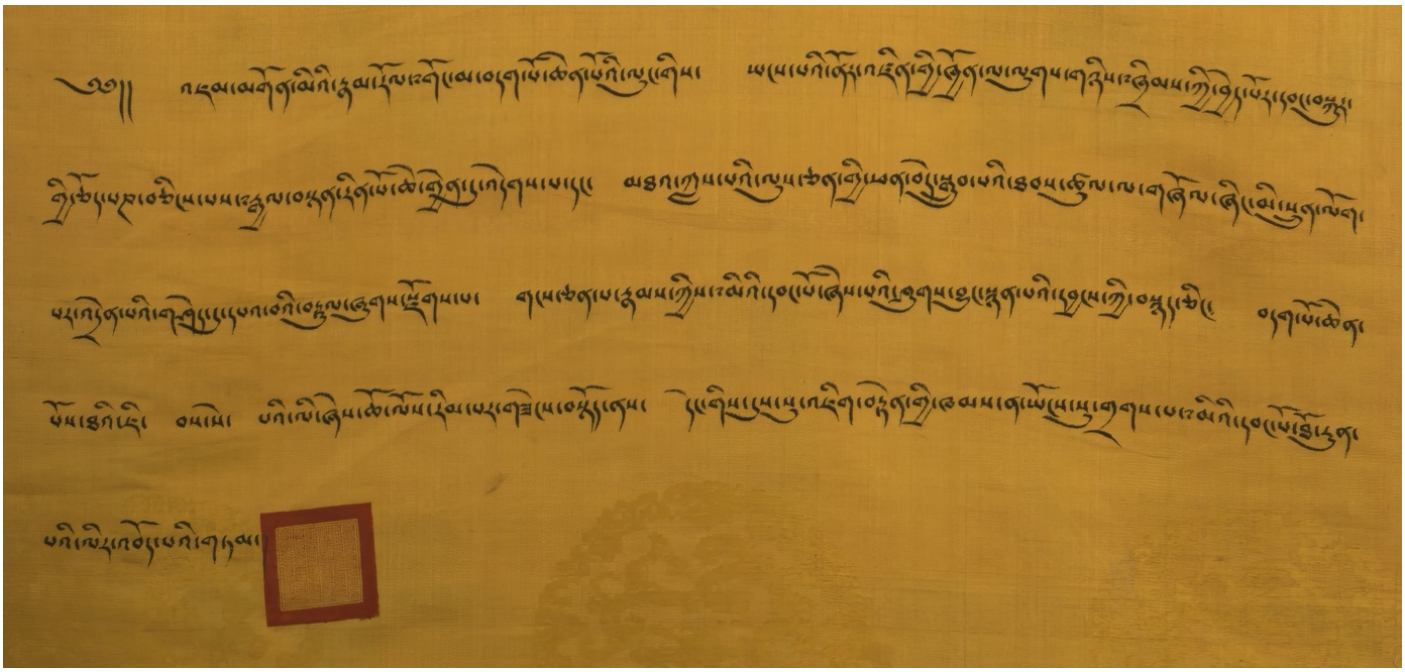




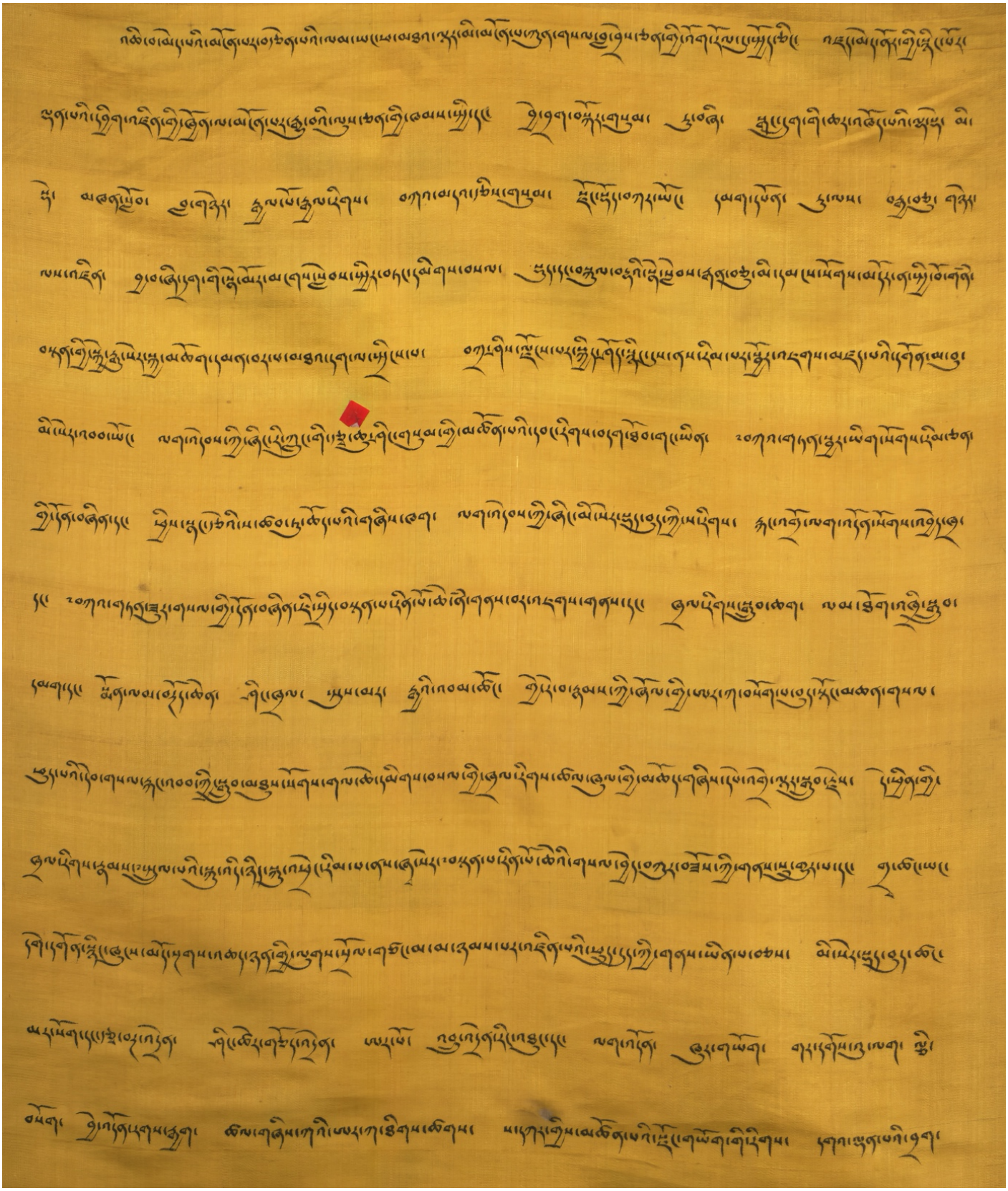


Two documents referring to SEAL 45

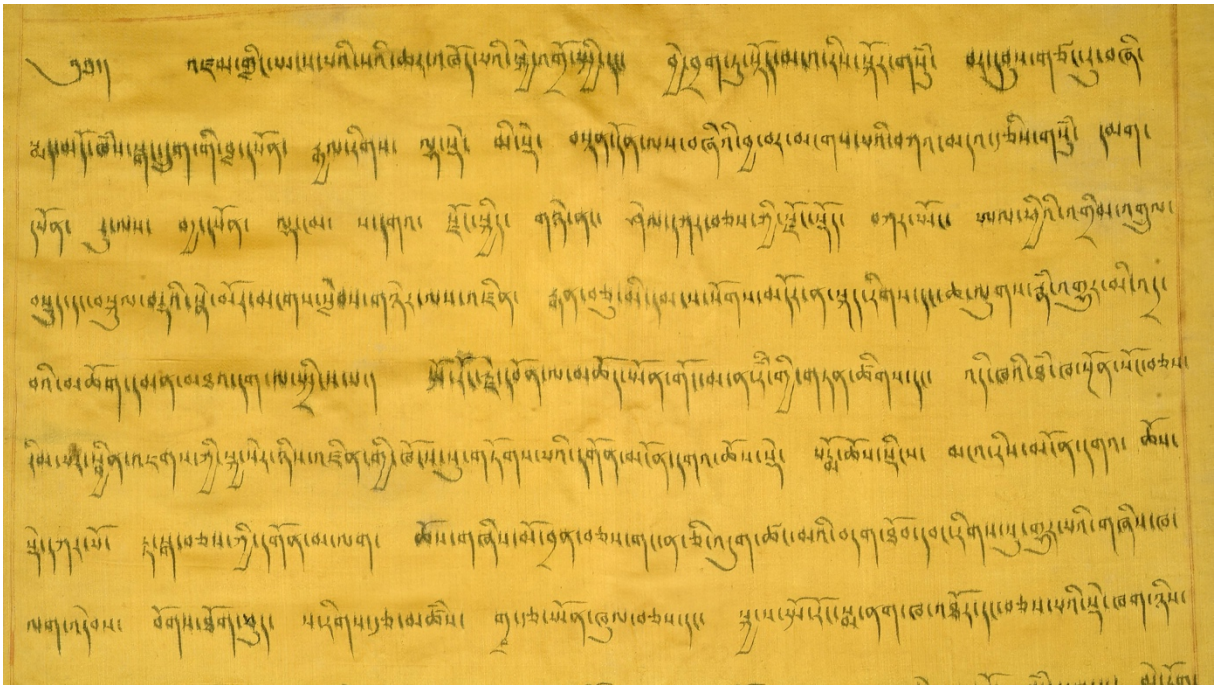
KDL: 012 2-1/#/8/8/4 (ID 1122)

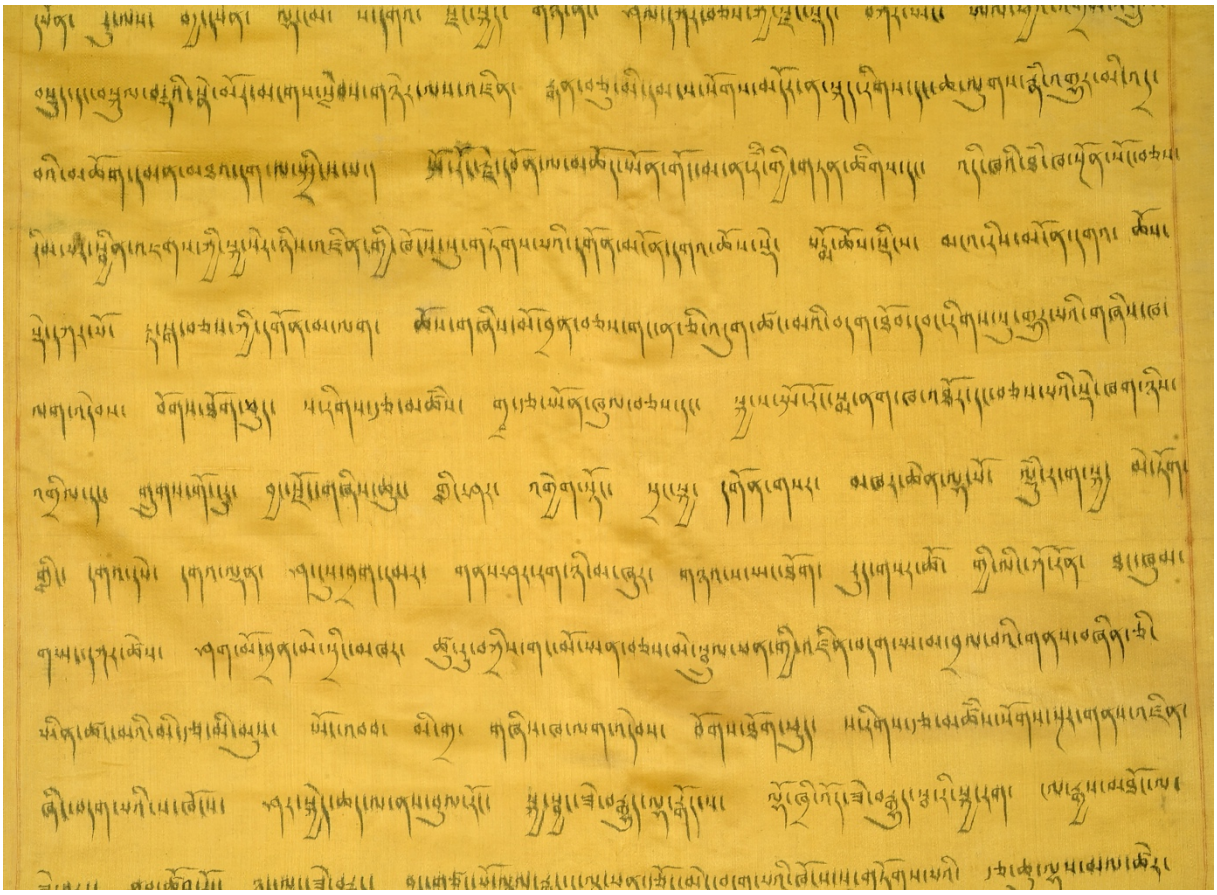


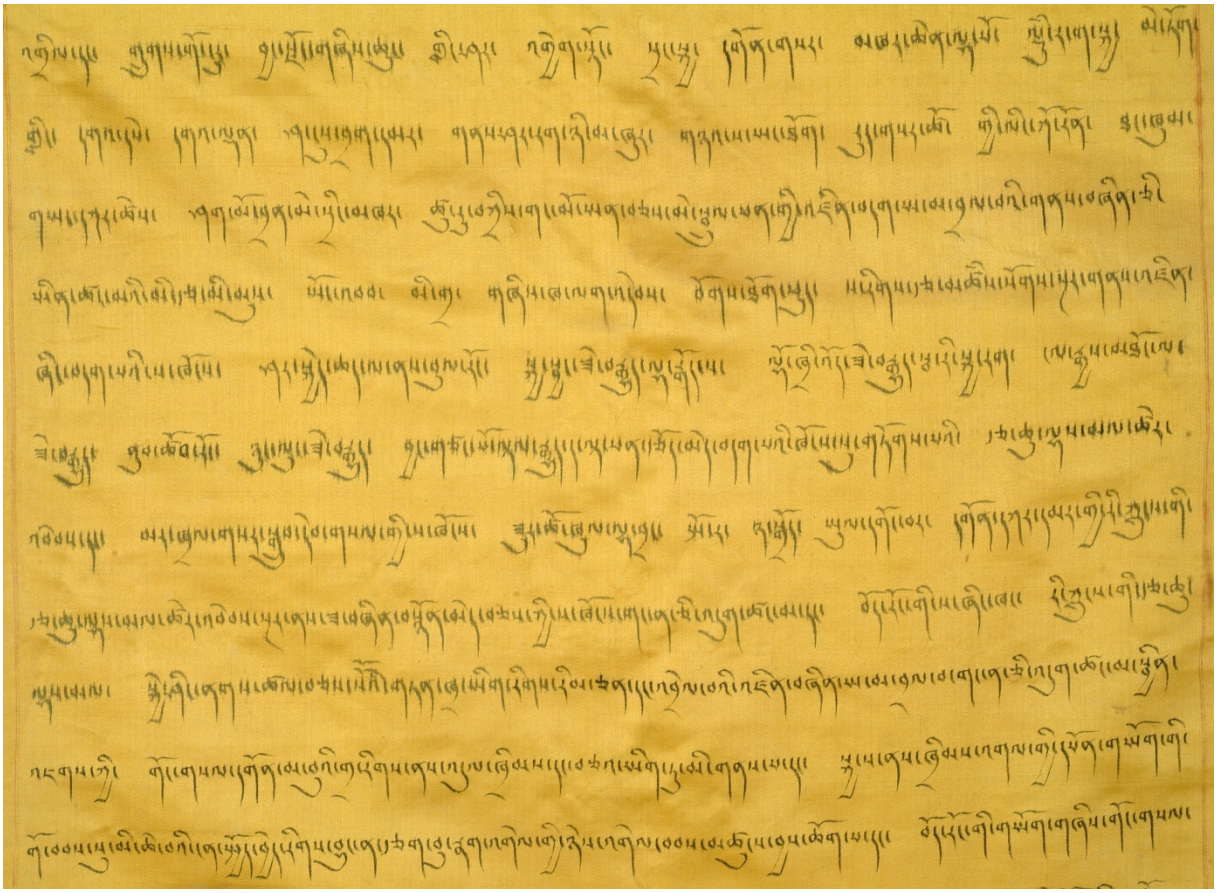
APPENDIX 1

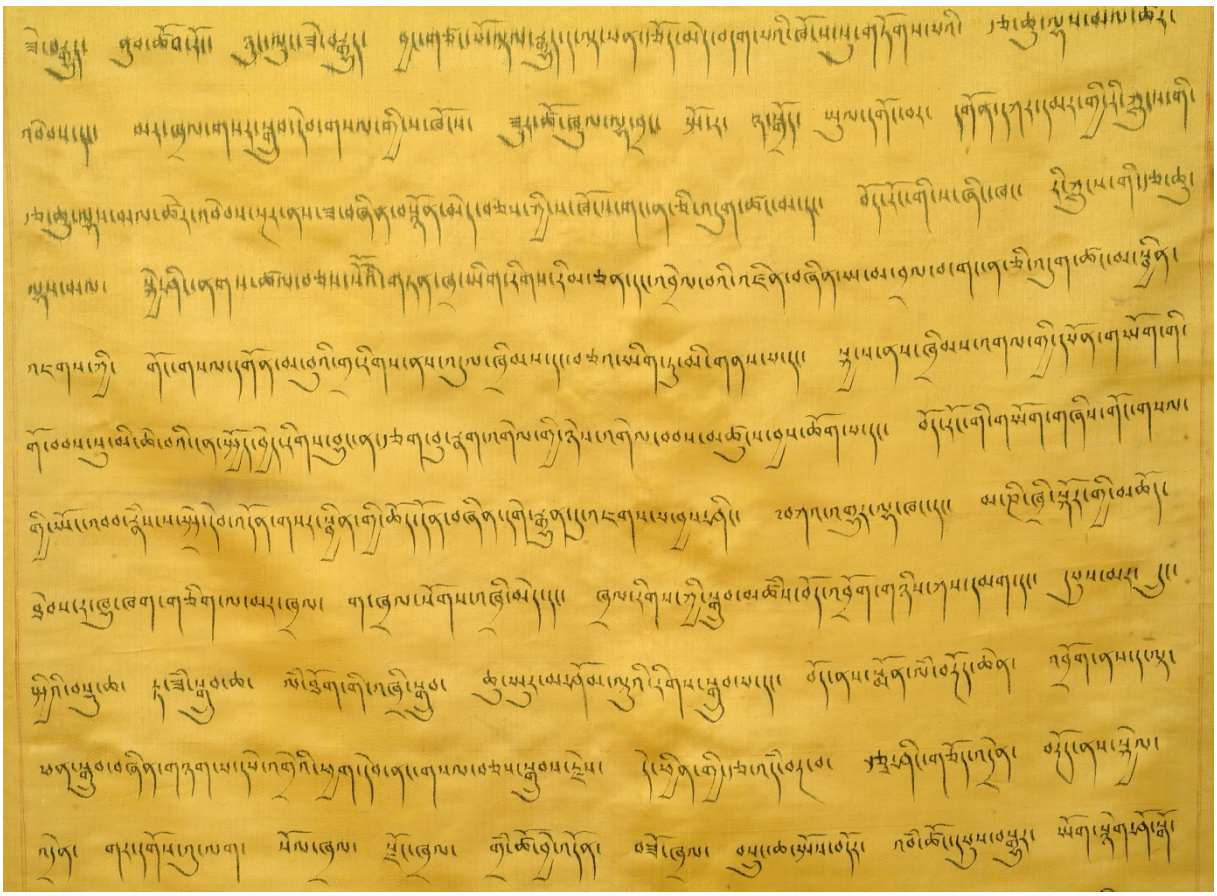


LTWA: 1673_LTWA_891



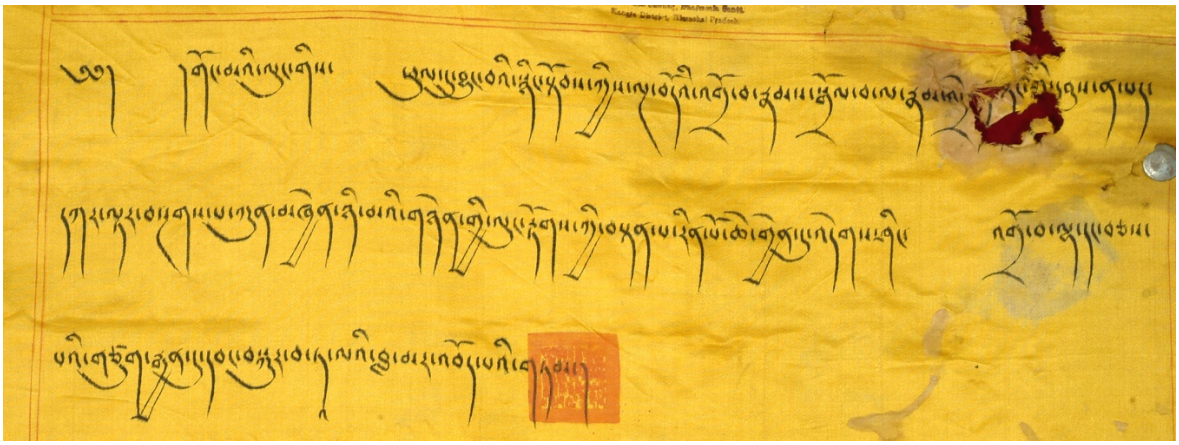


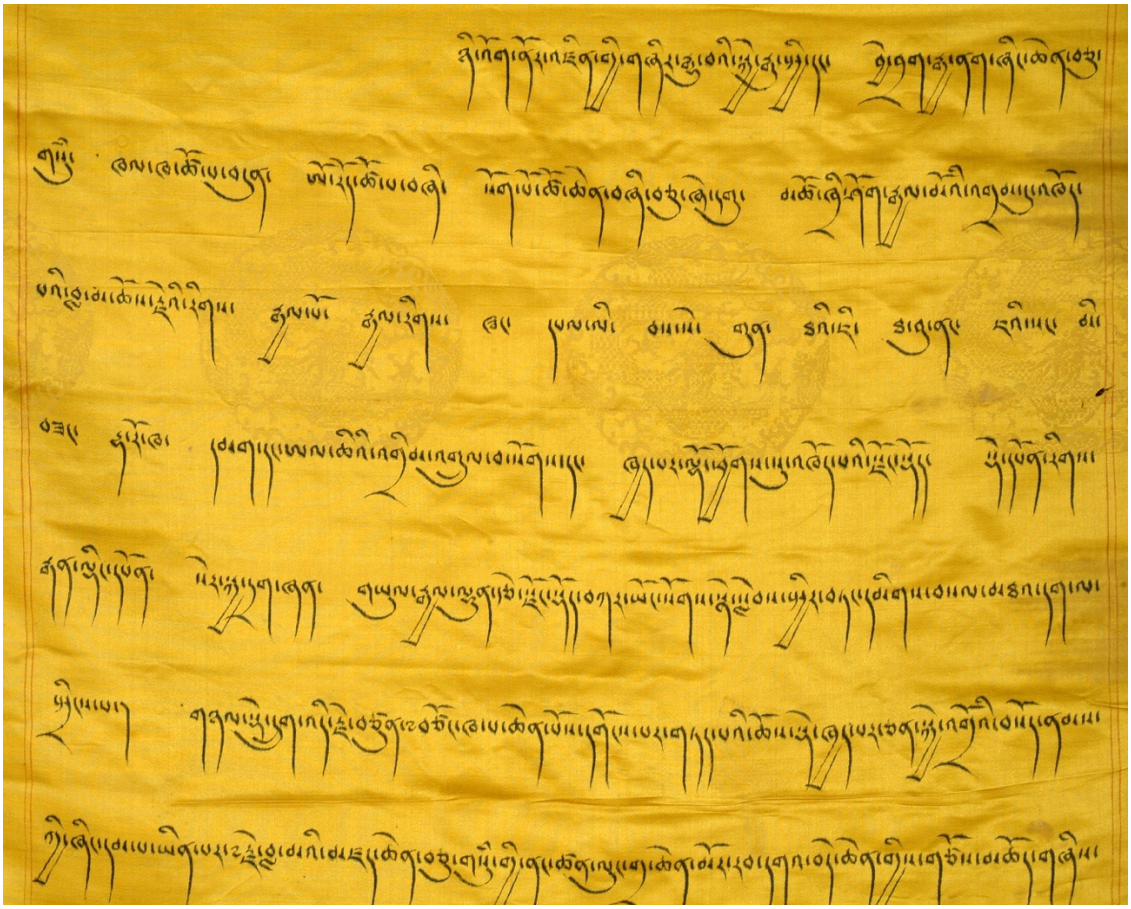


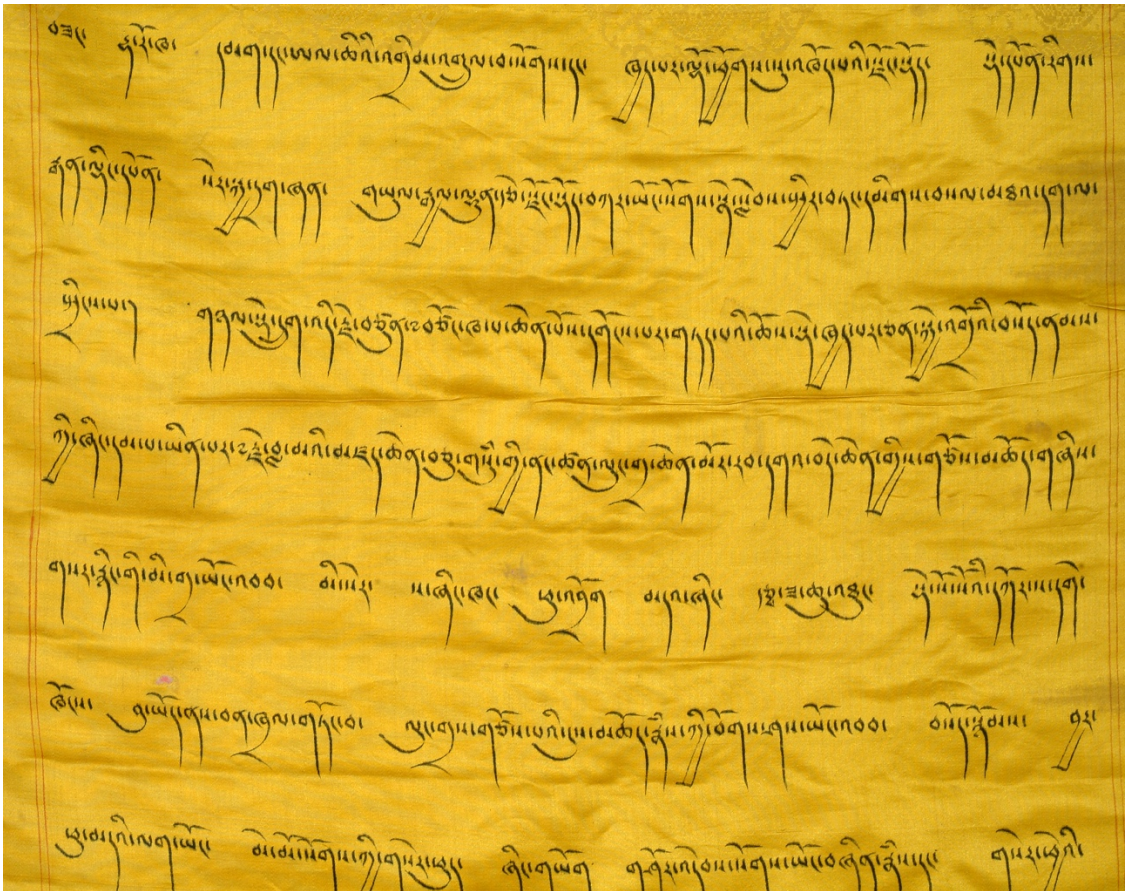


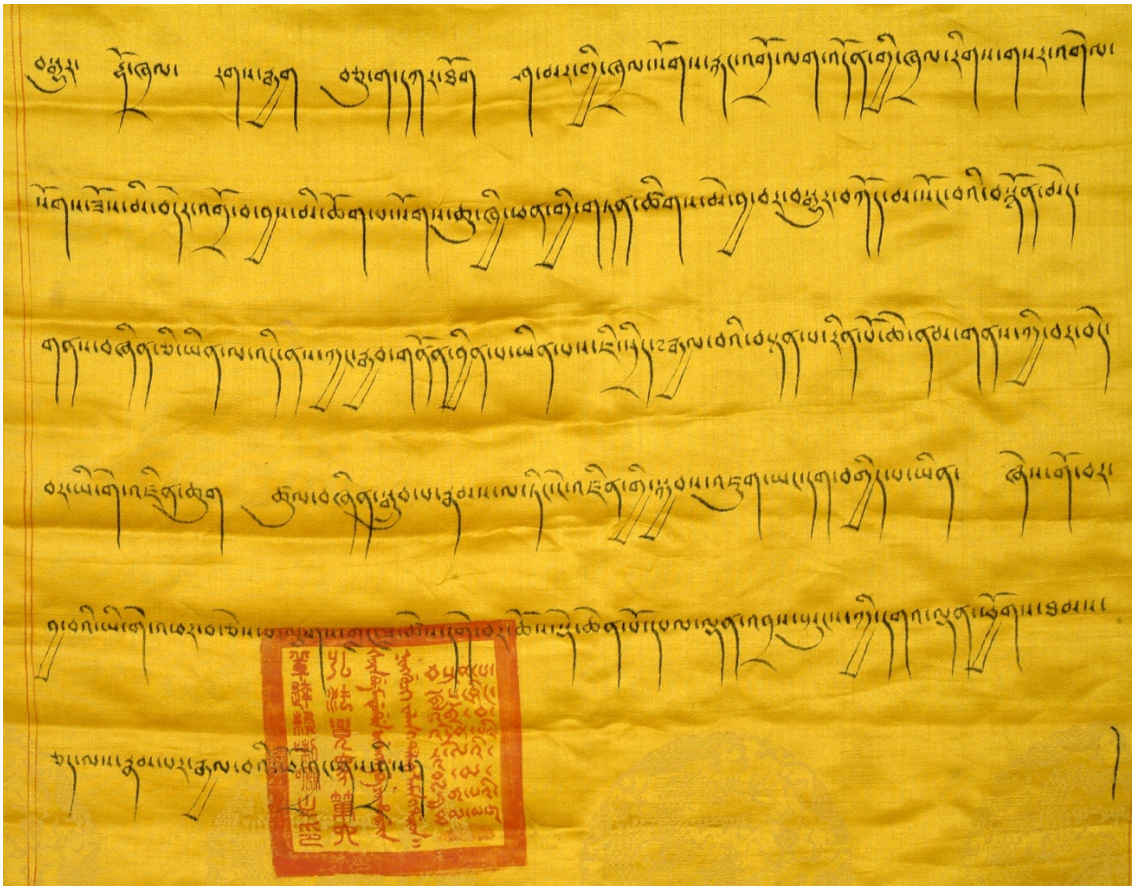
Document referring to SEAL 55

LTWA: 0950_LTWA_162



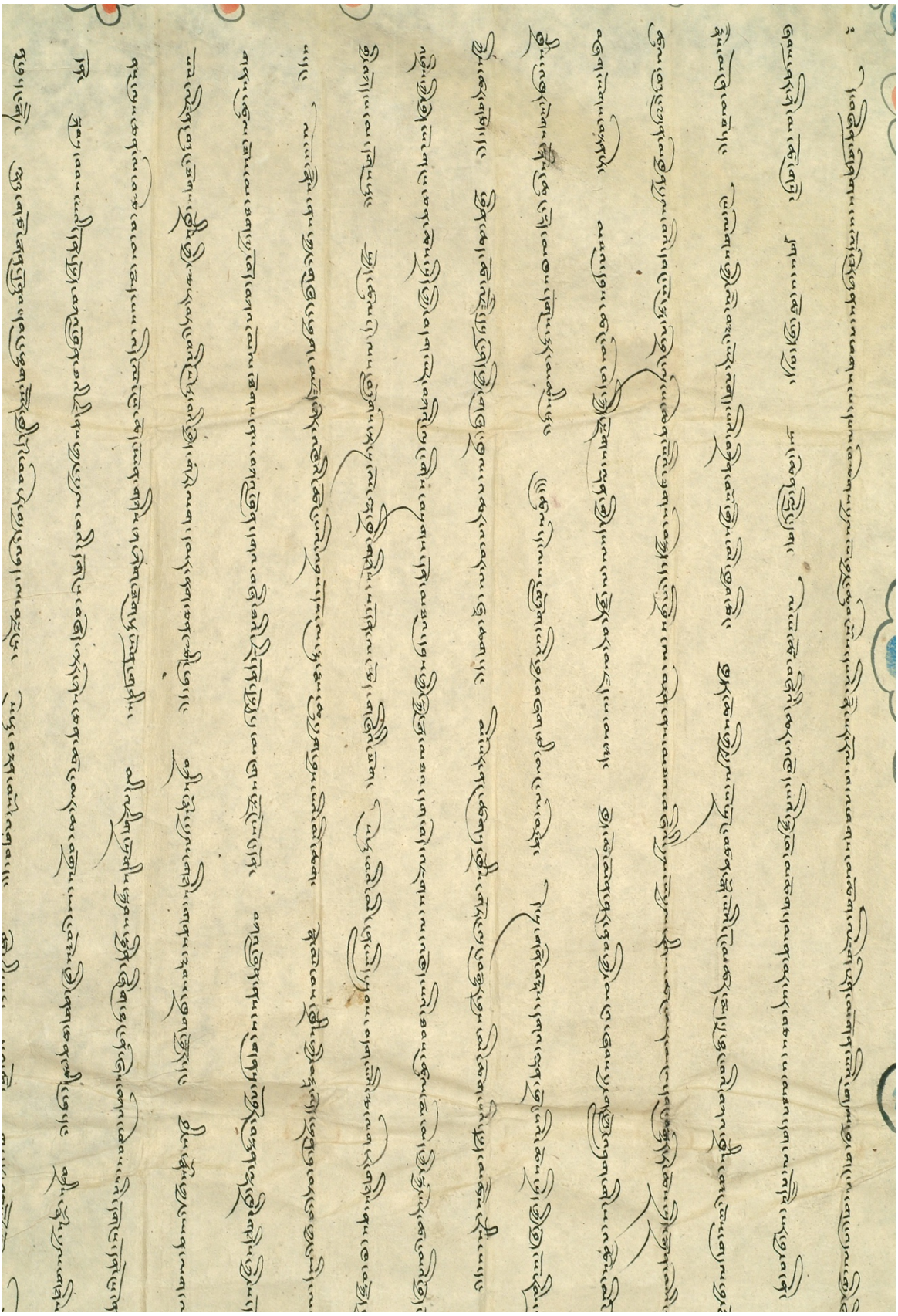






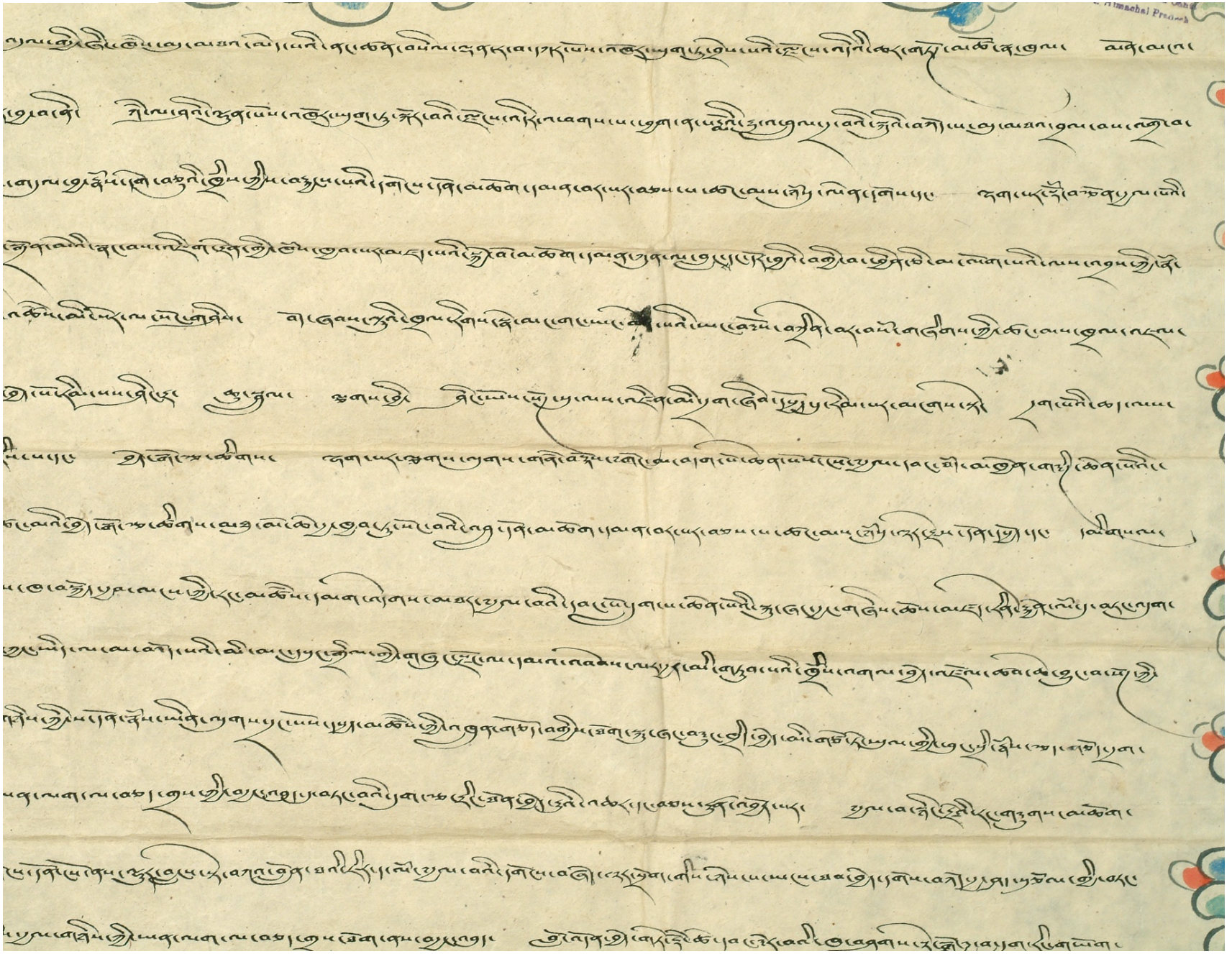
Document referring to SEAL 56b

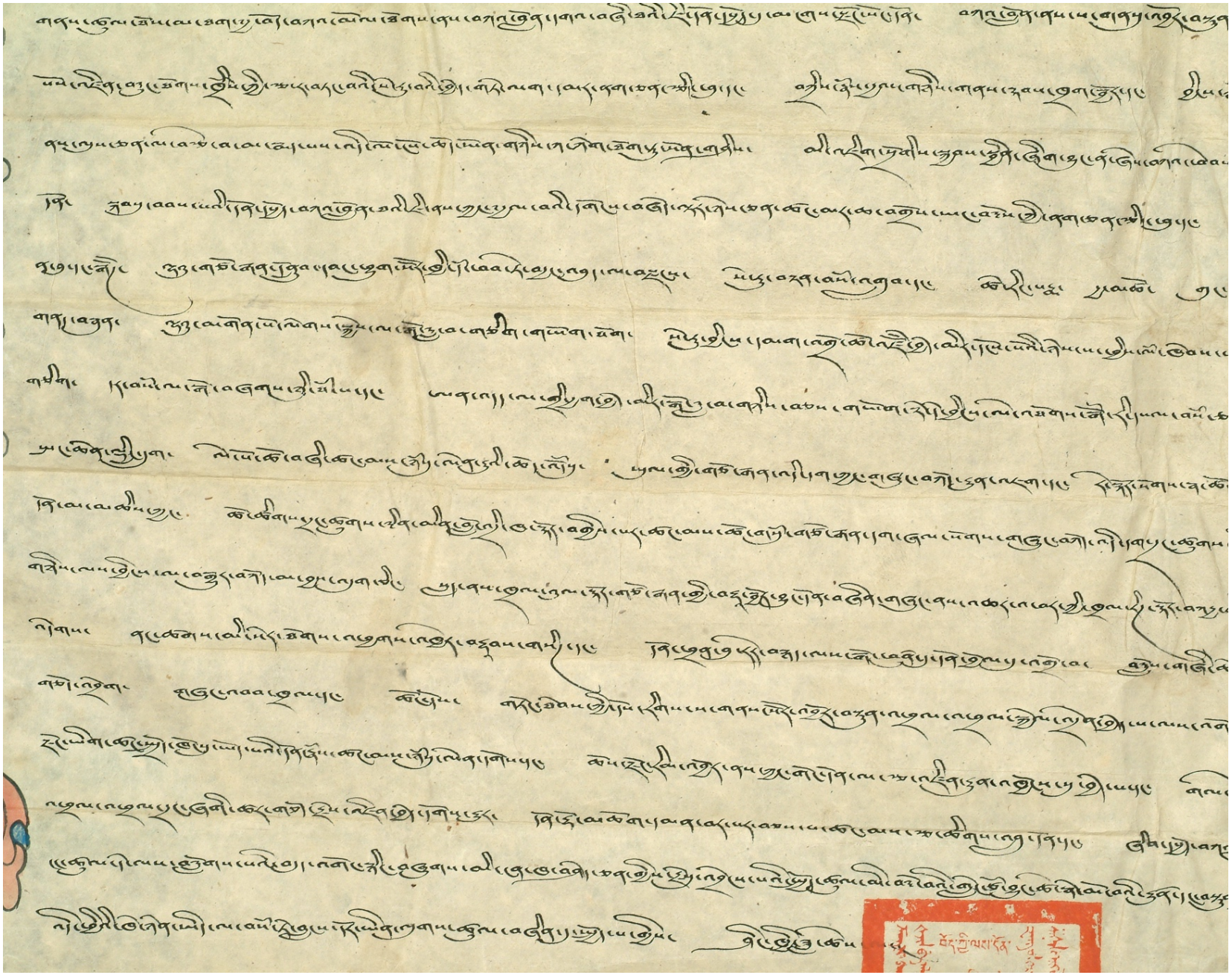
LTWA: 0946_LTWA_158



Left side

Right side





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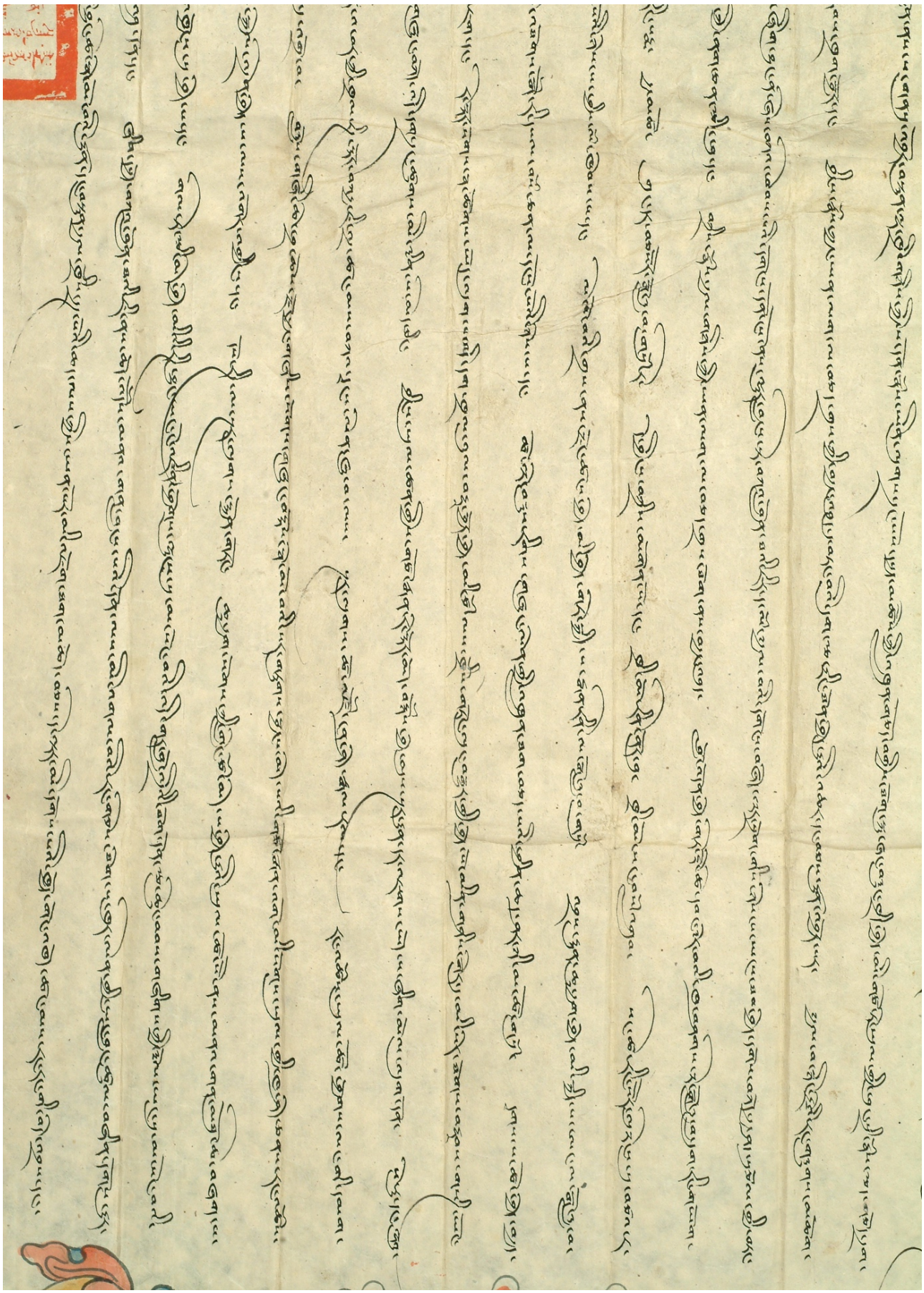

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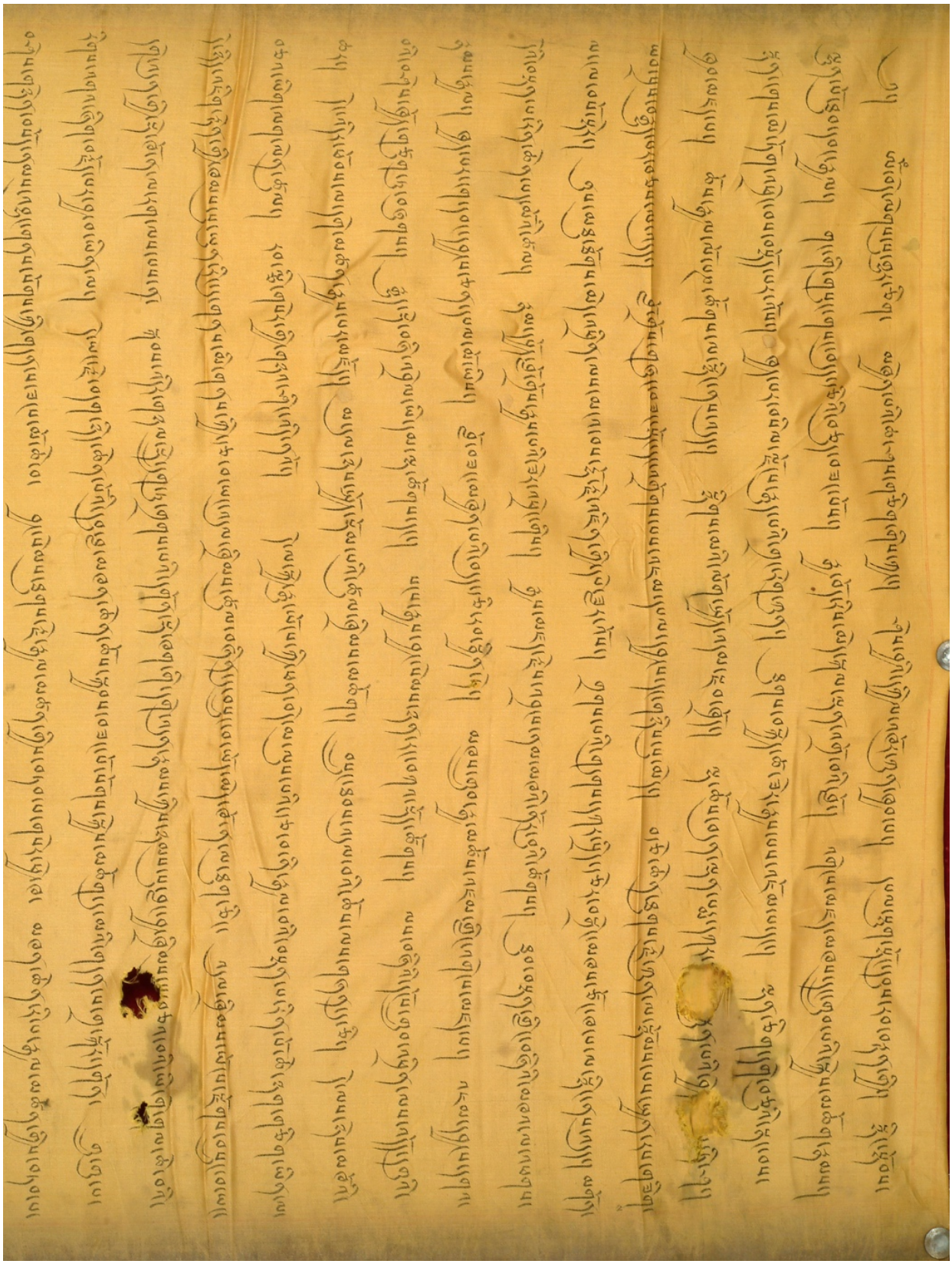
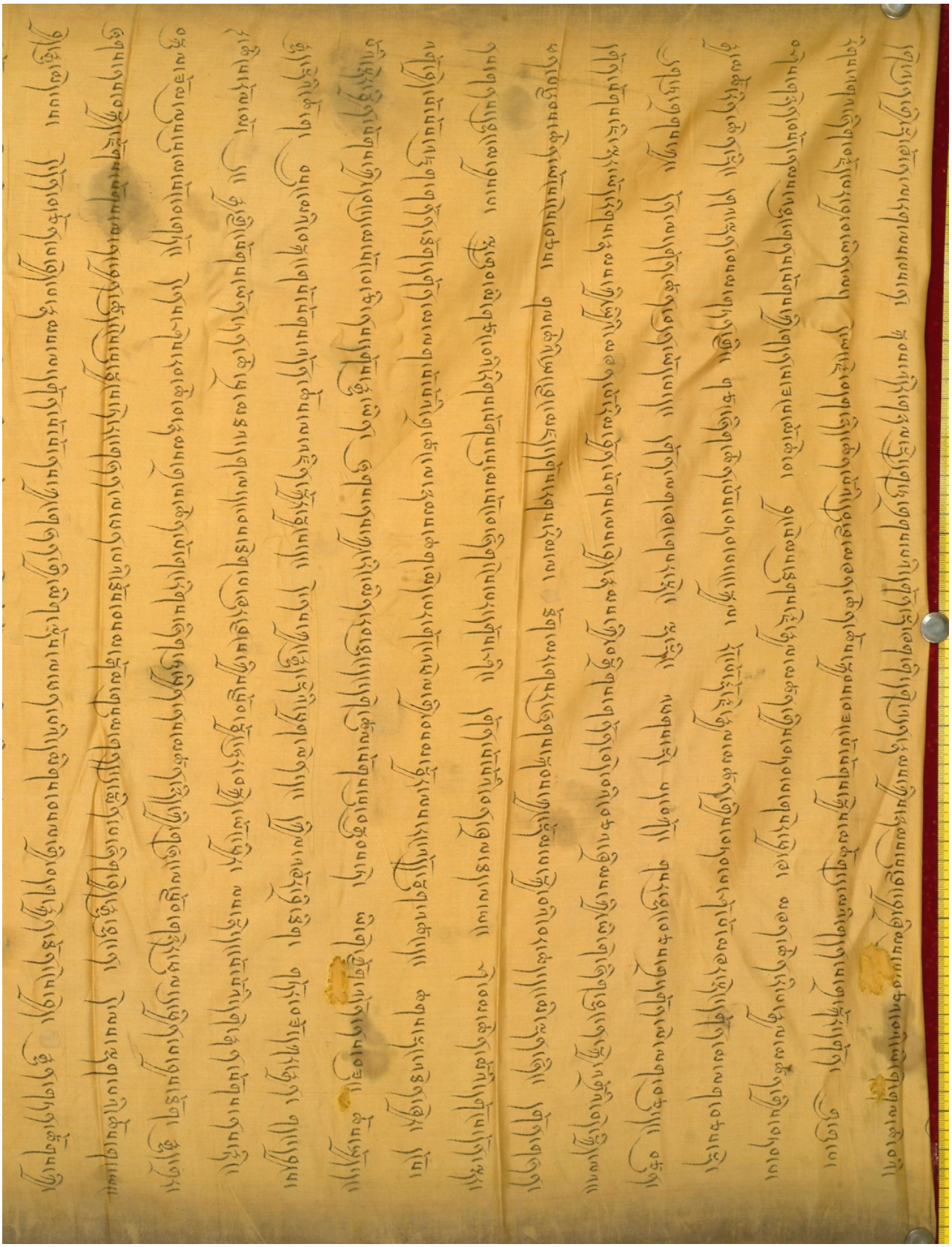
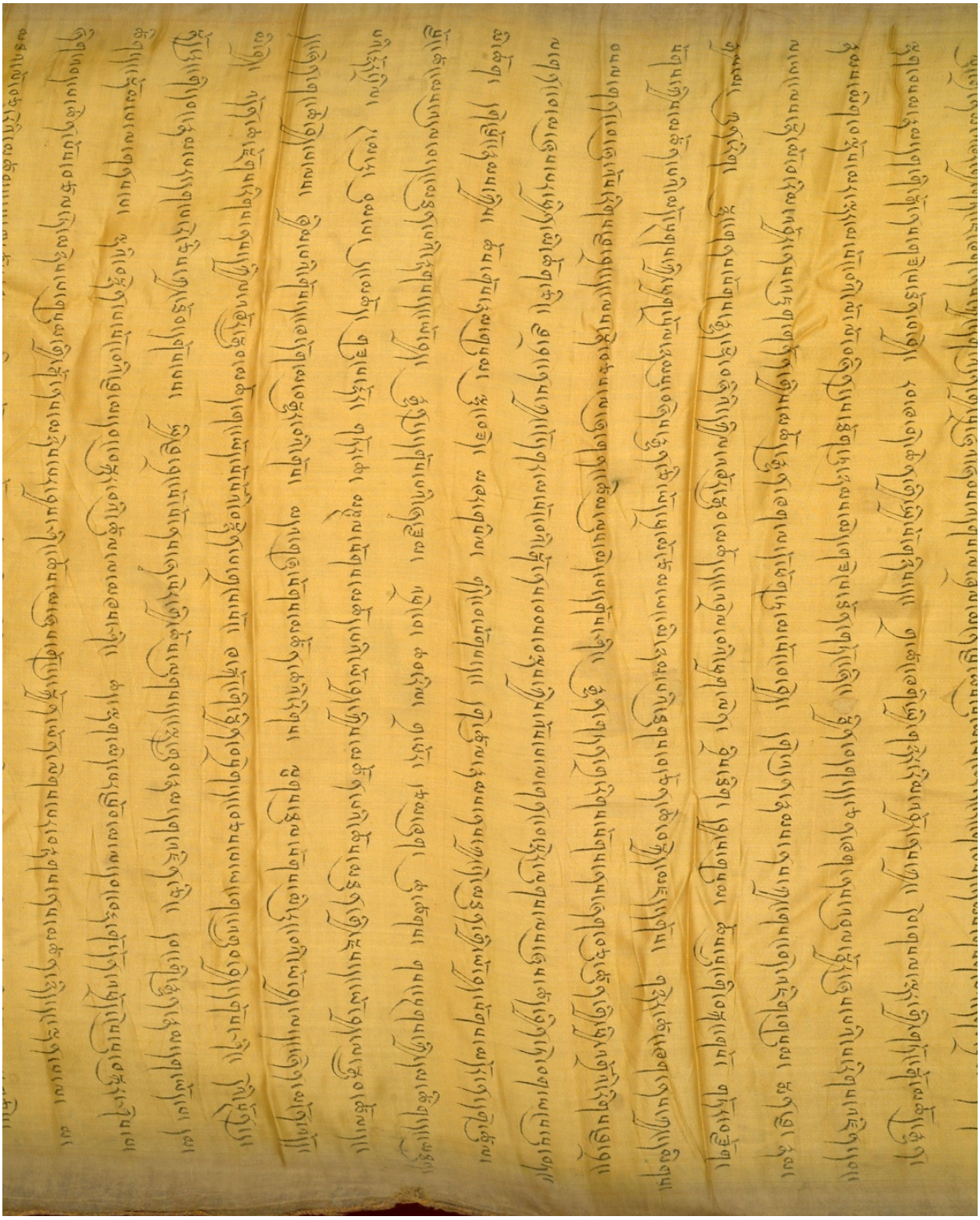
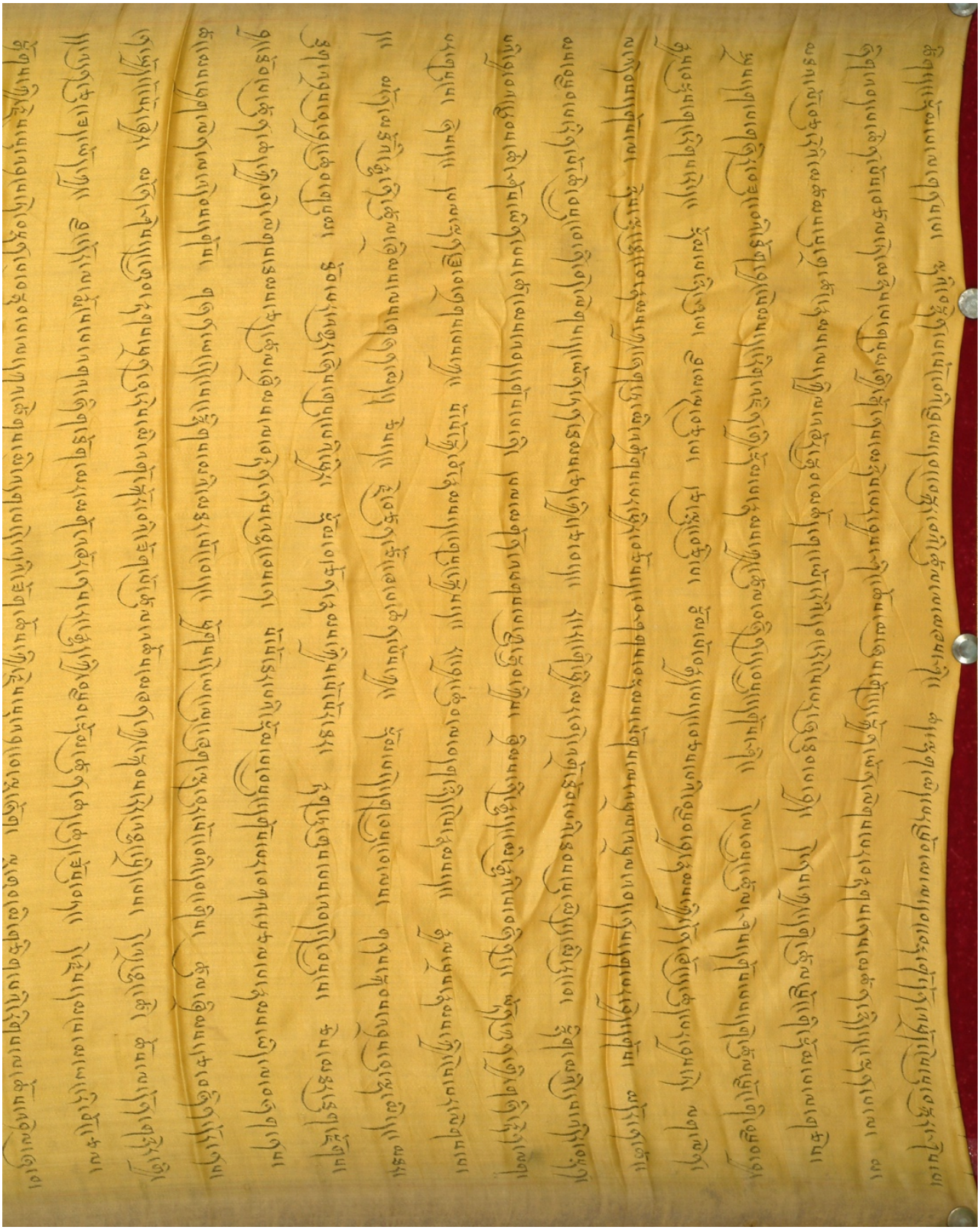
Document referring to SEAL 57

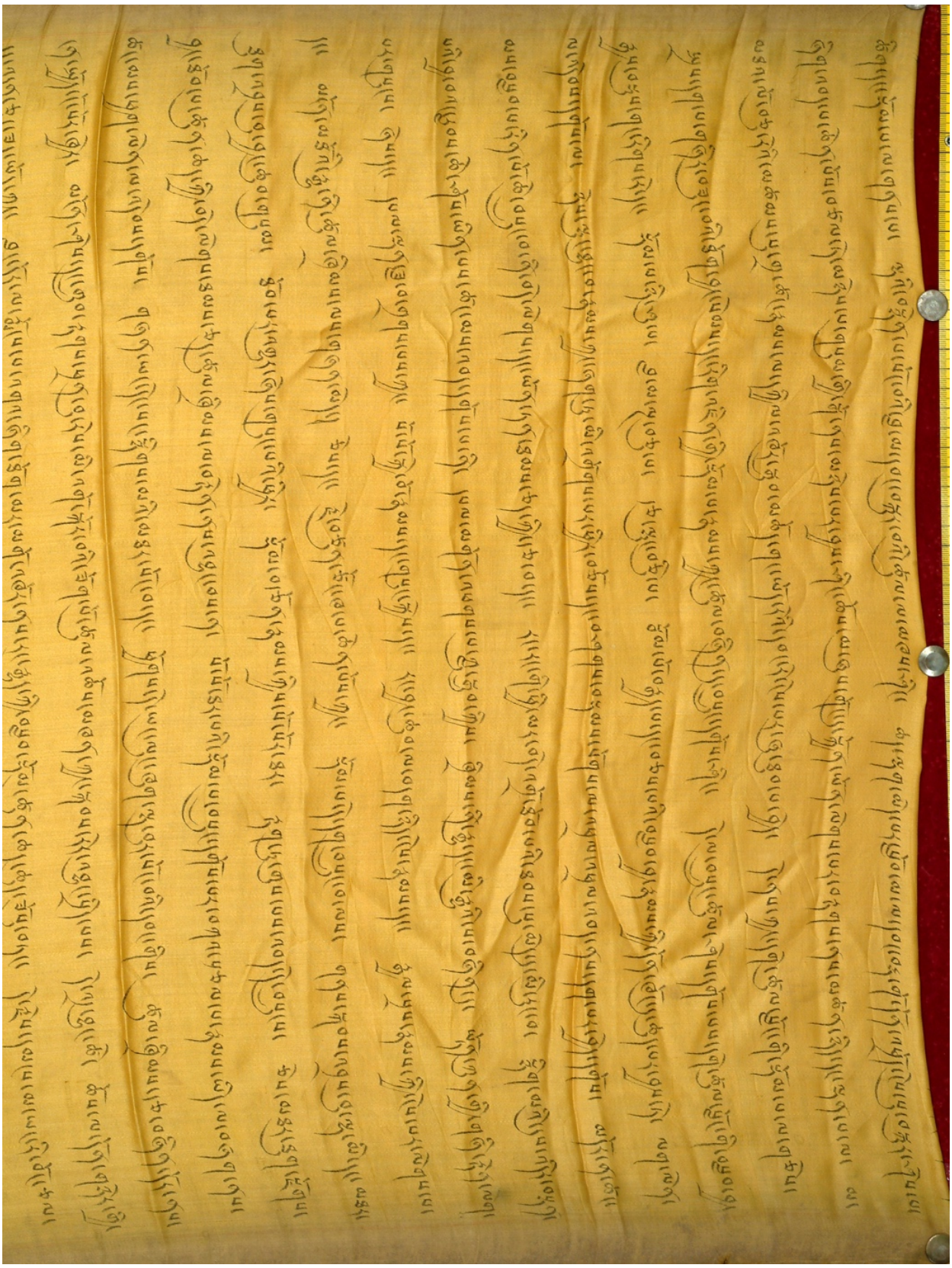
LTWA: 0952_LTWA_164

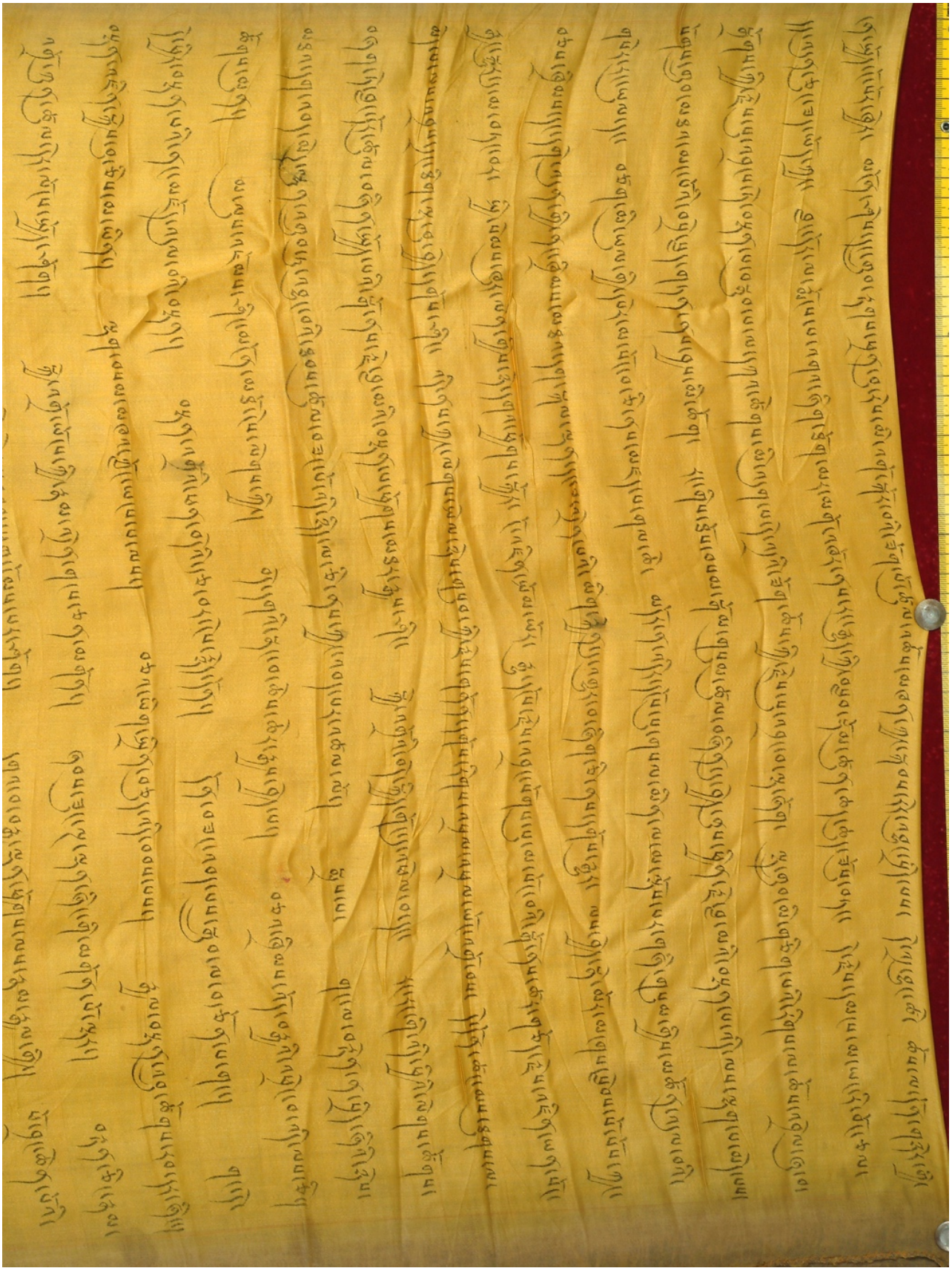


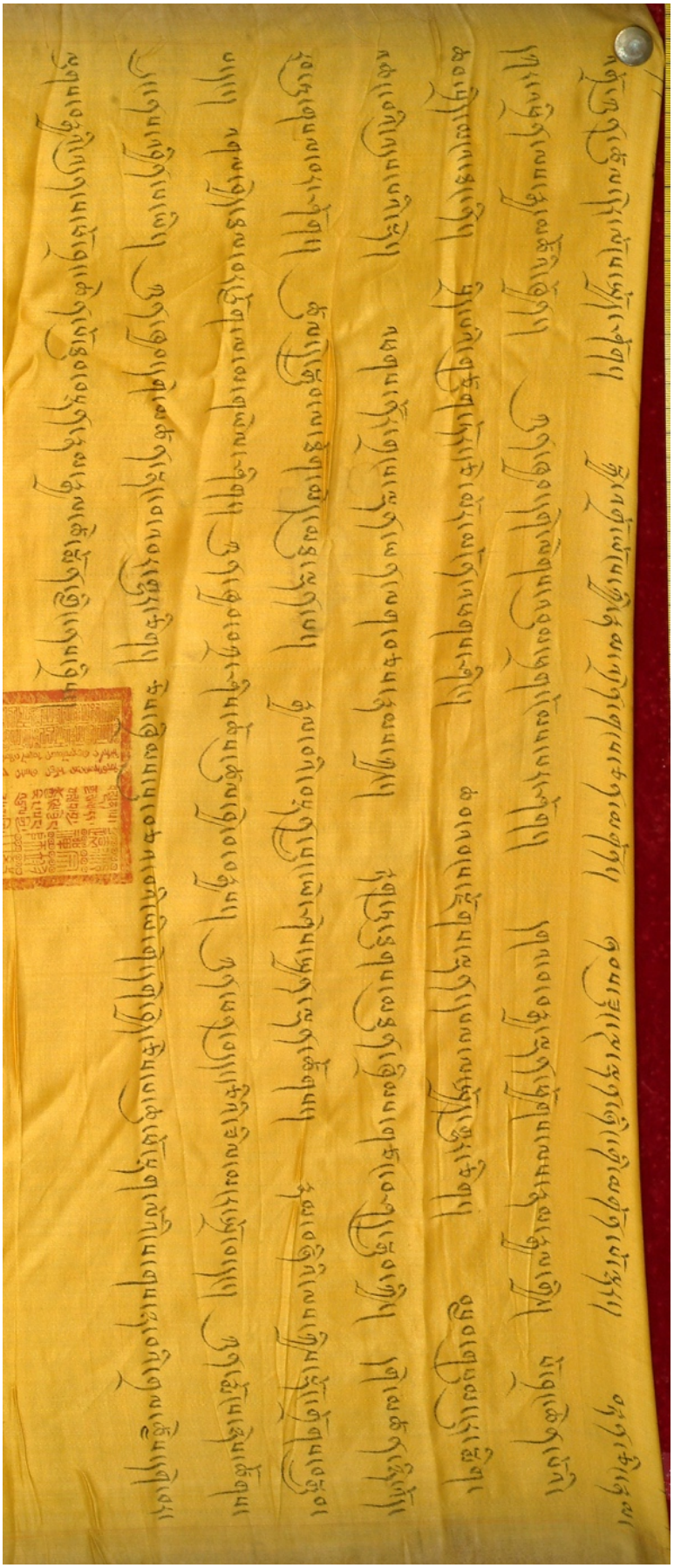






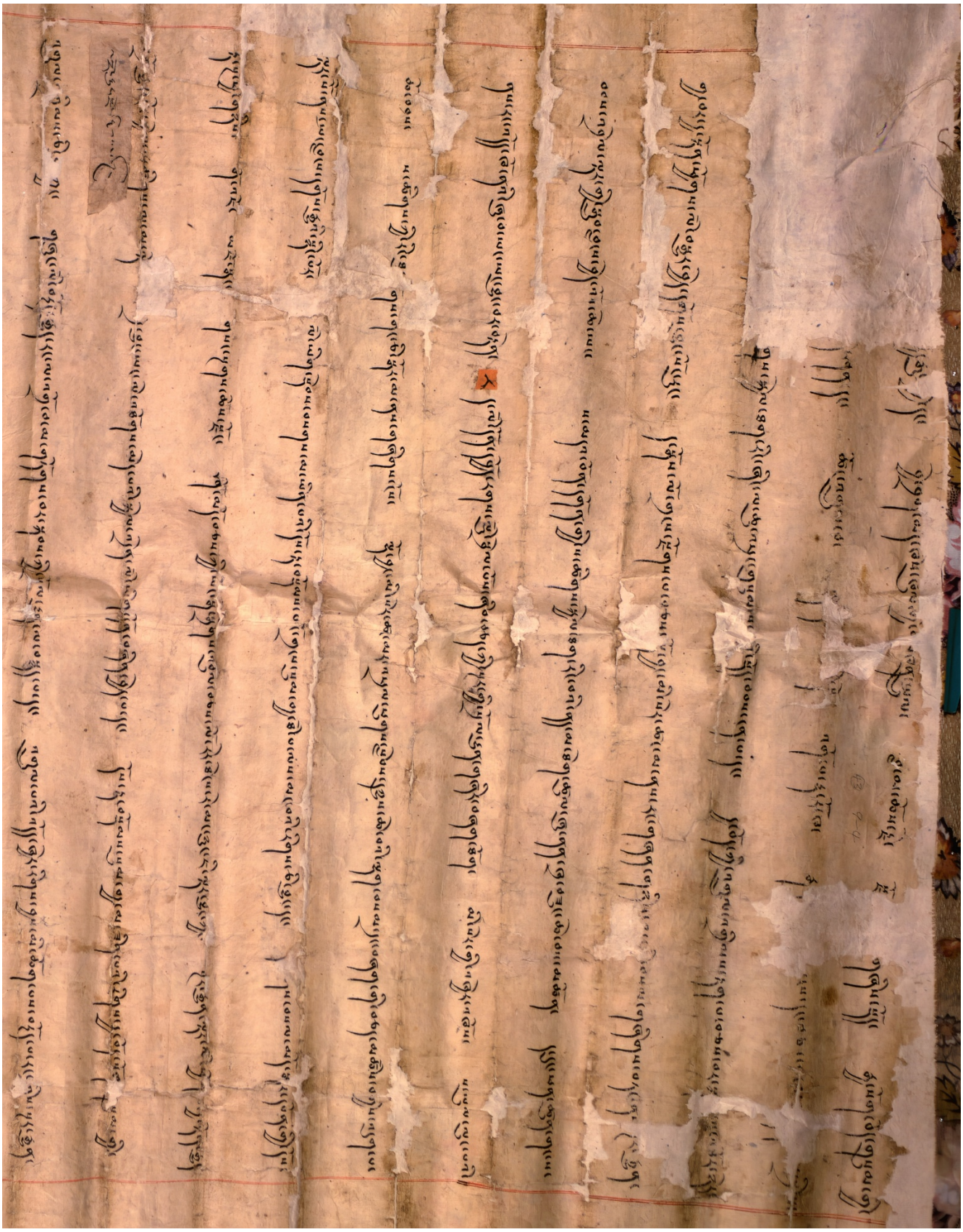






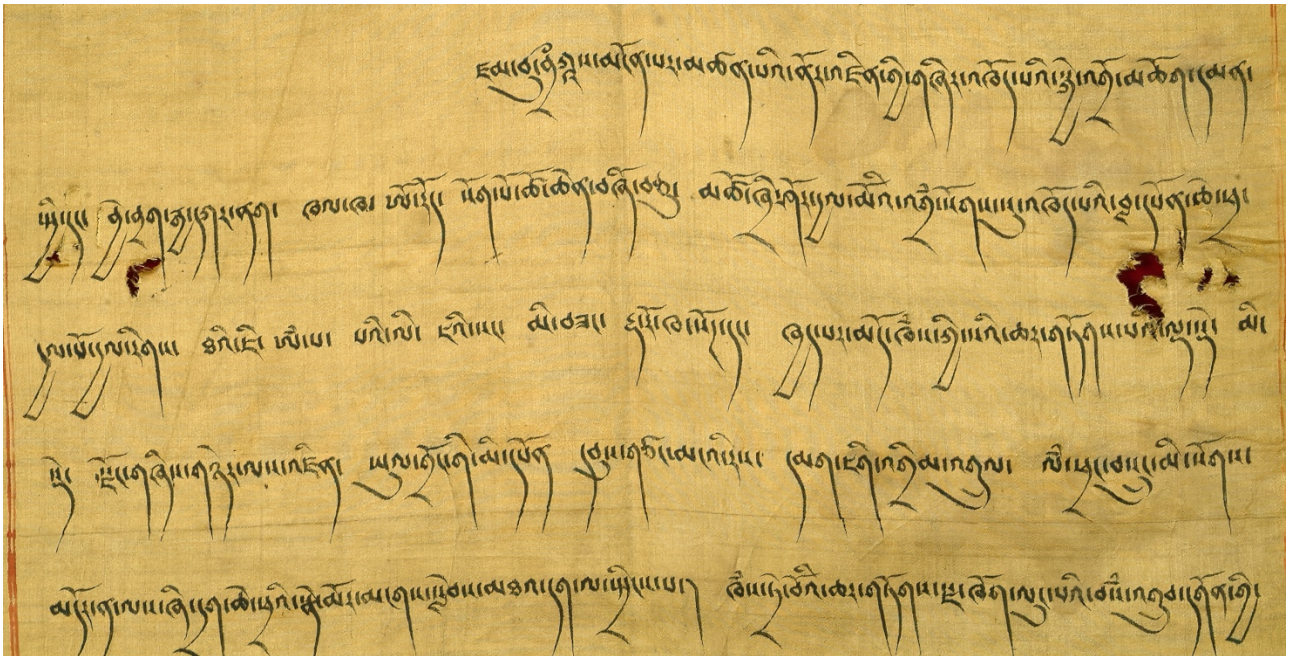
Document referring to SEAL 58

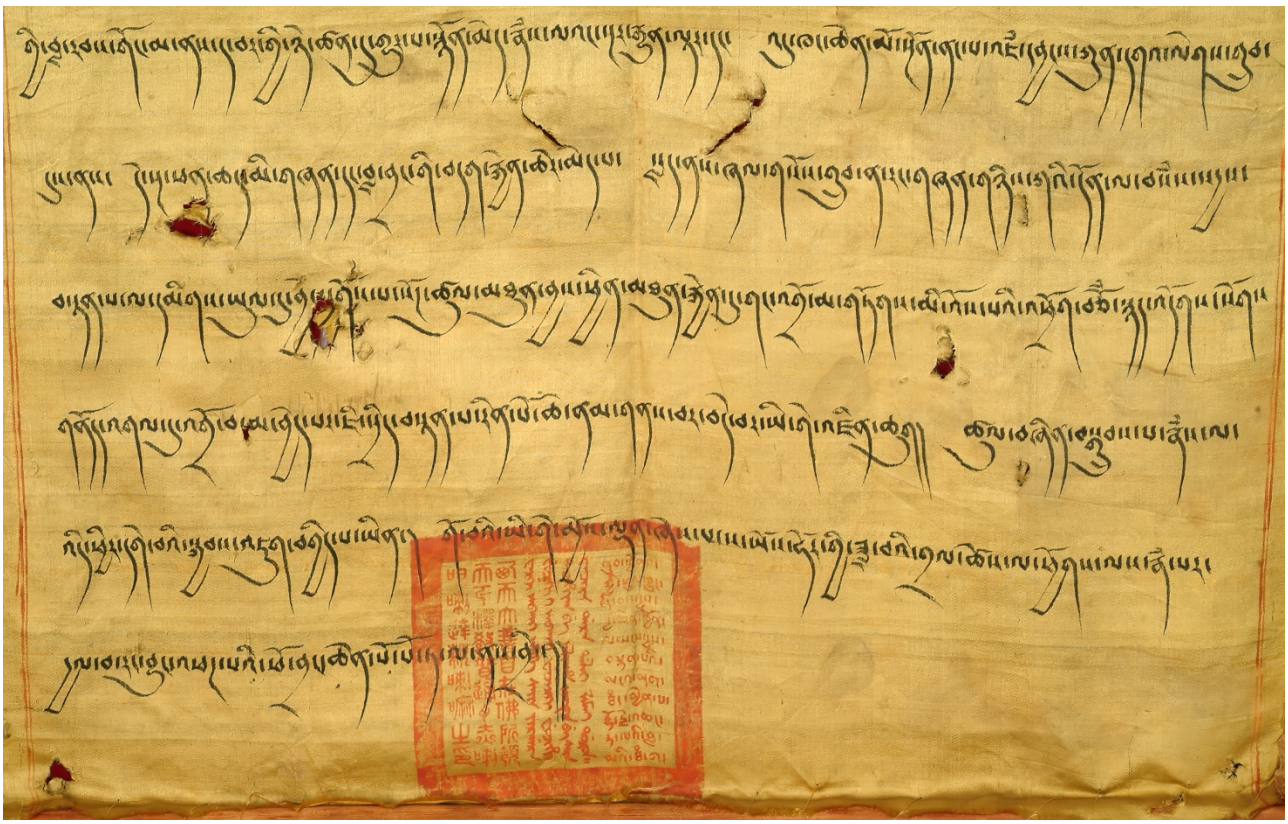
KDL: 012 2-1/#/43/9/4 (ID 1460)



Document referring to SEAL 59

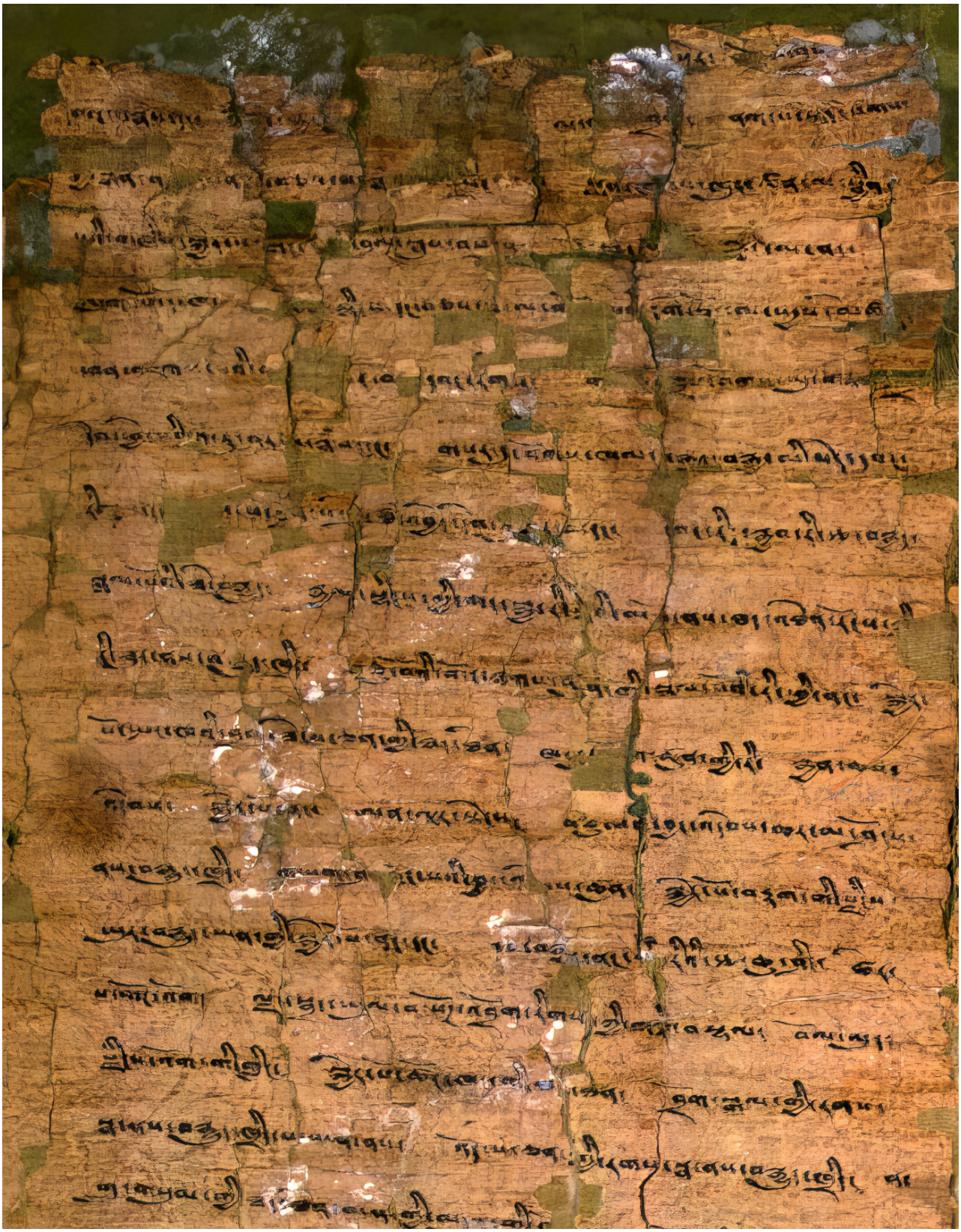
LTWA: 1672_LTWA_890

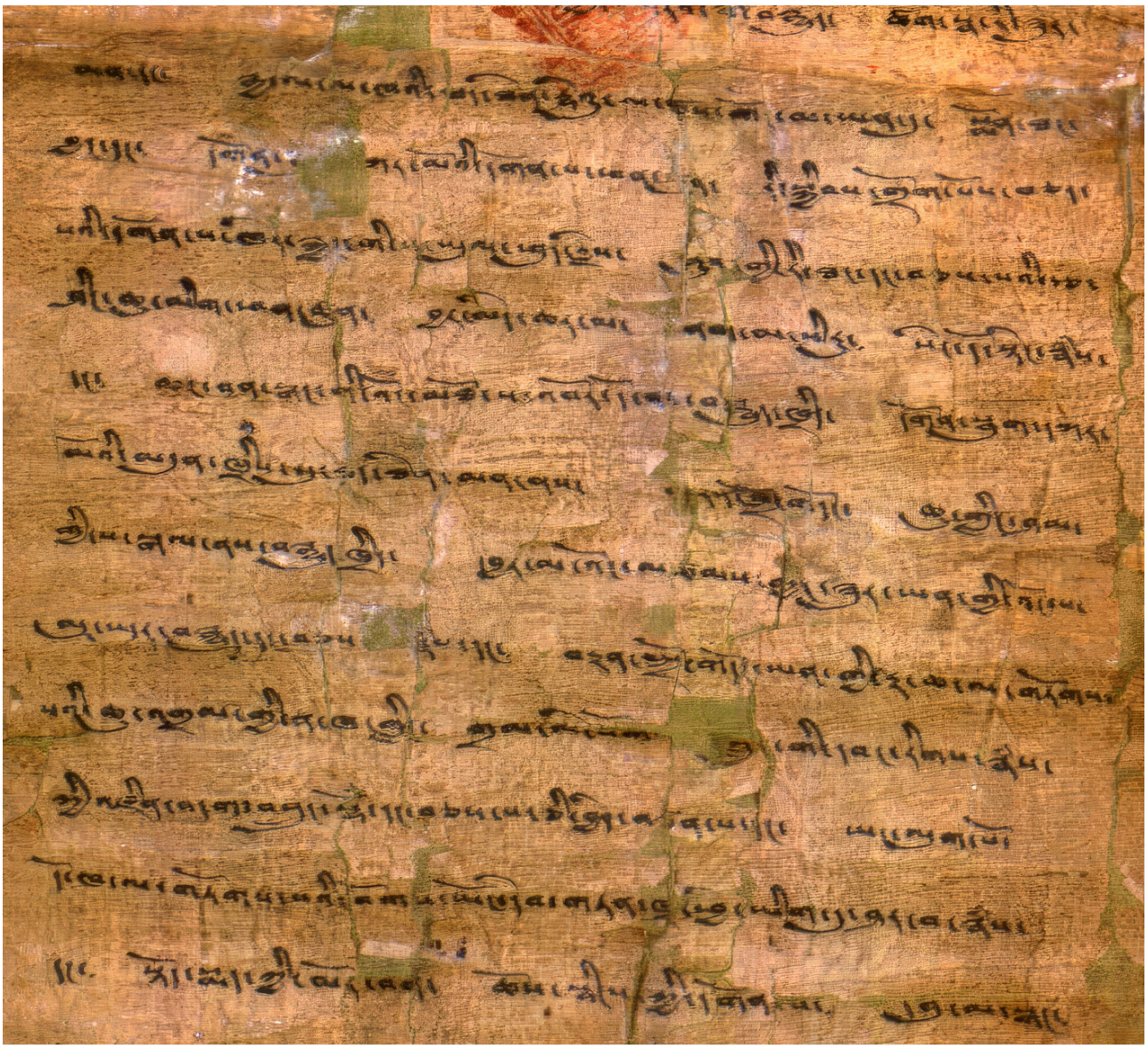


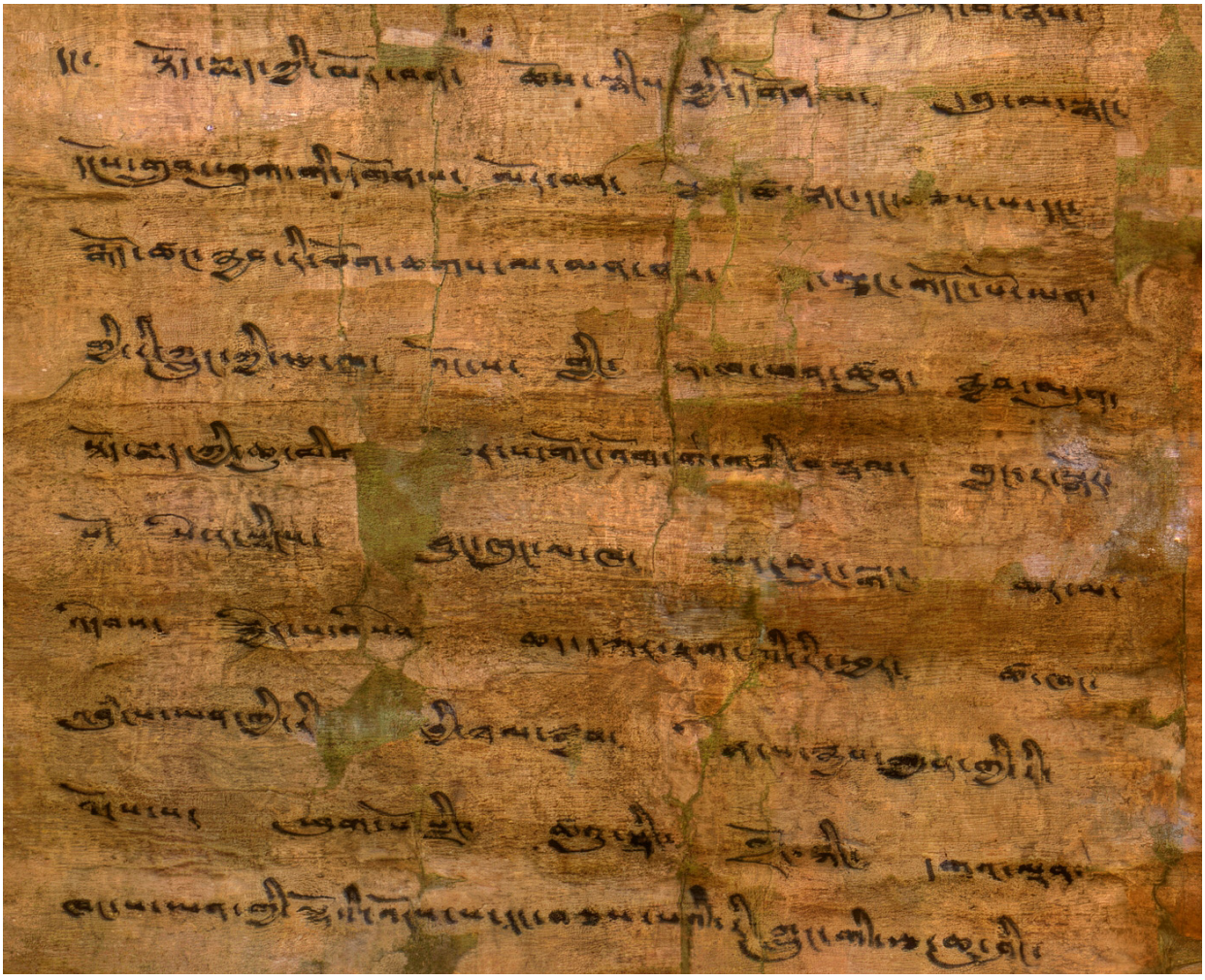


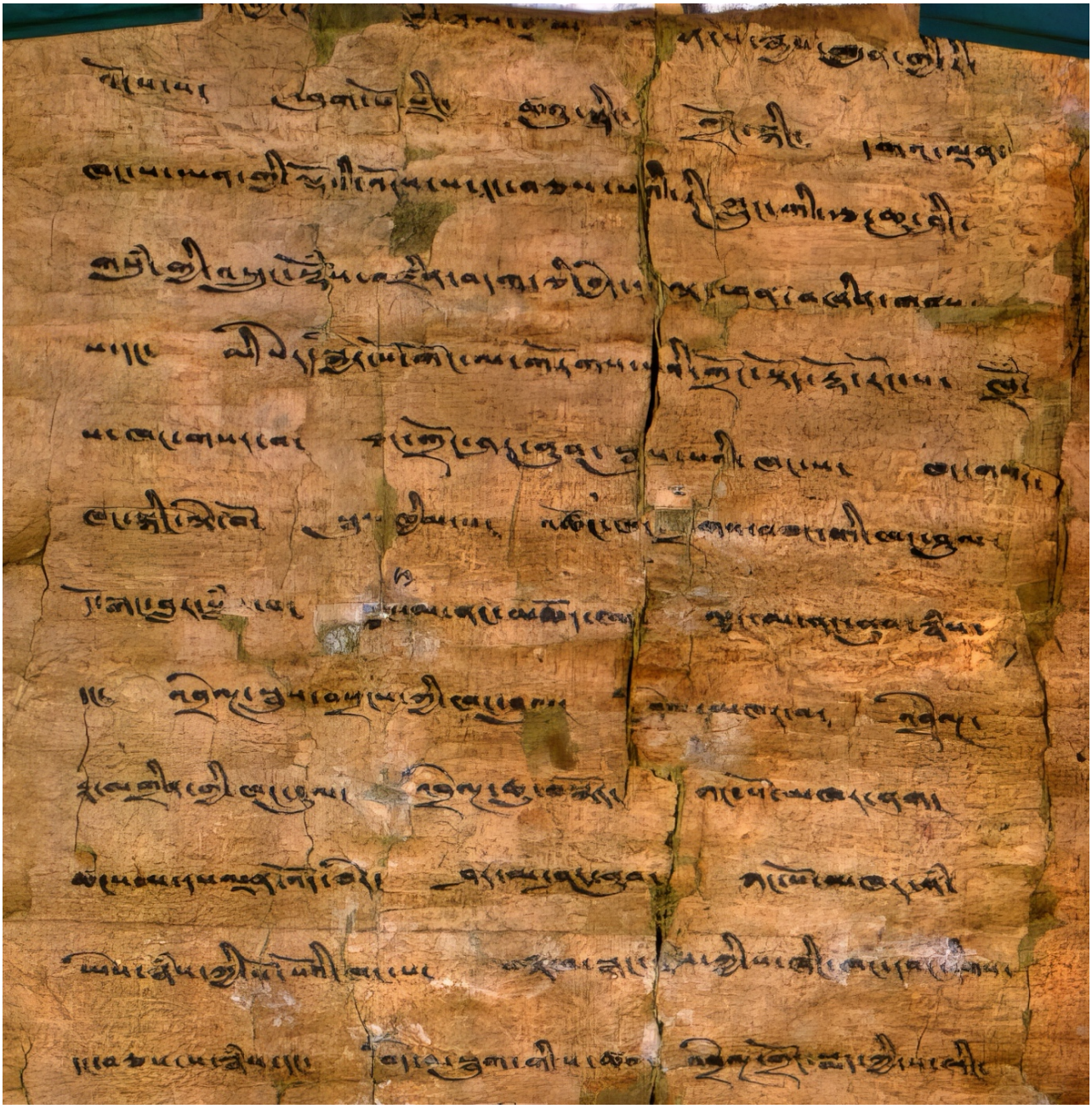
Document referring to SEAL 67a

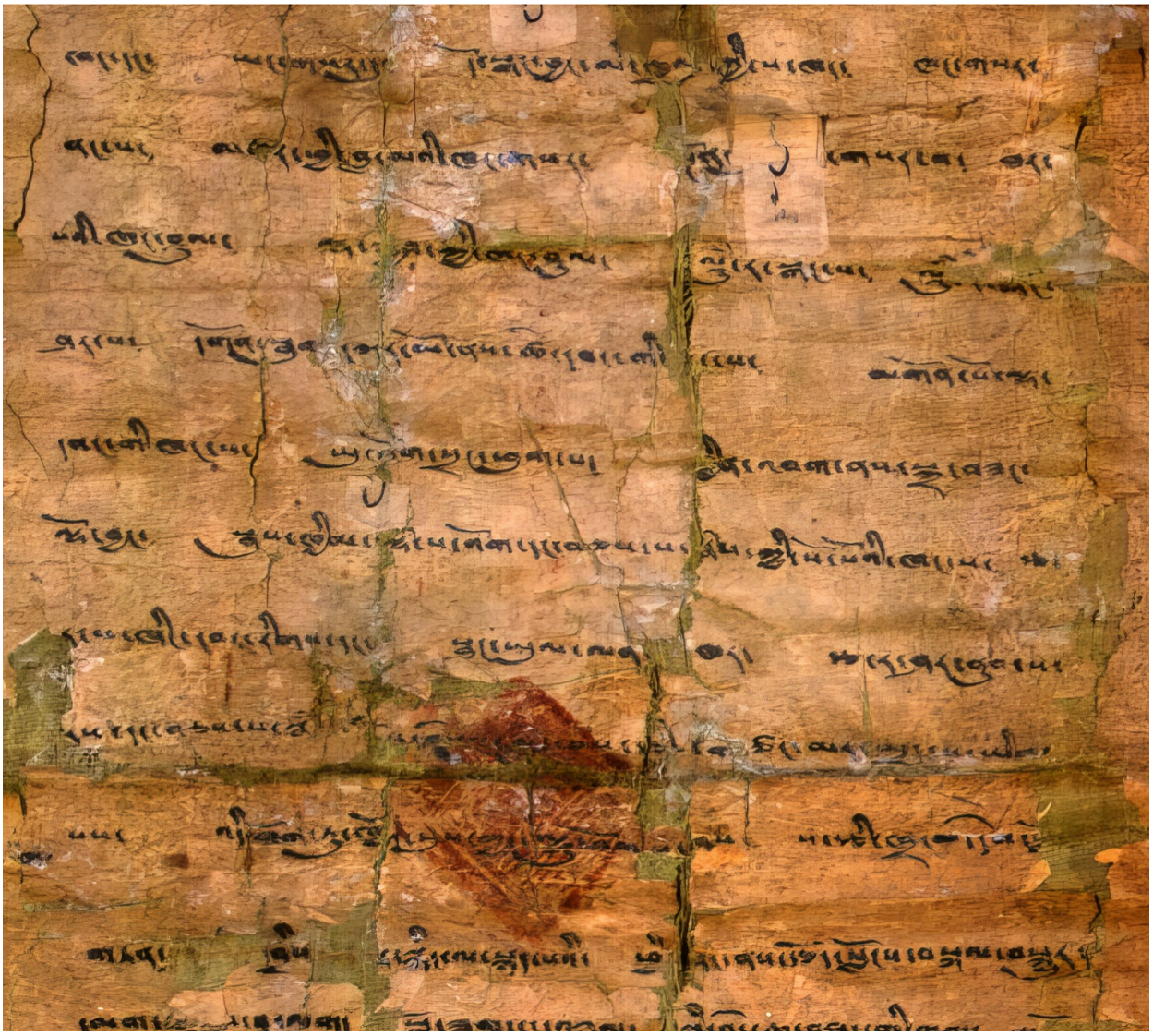
KDL: 012 2-1/#/1/7/3 (ID 959)

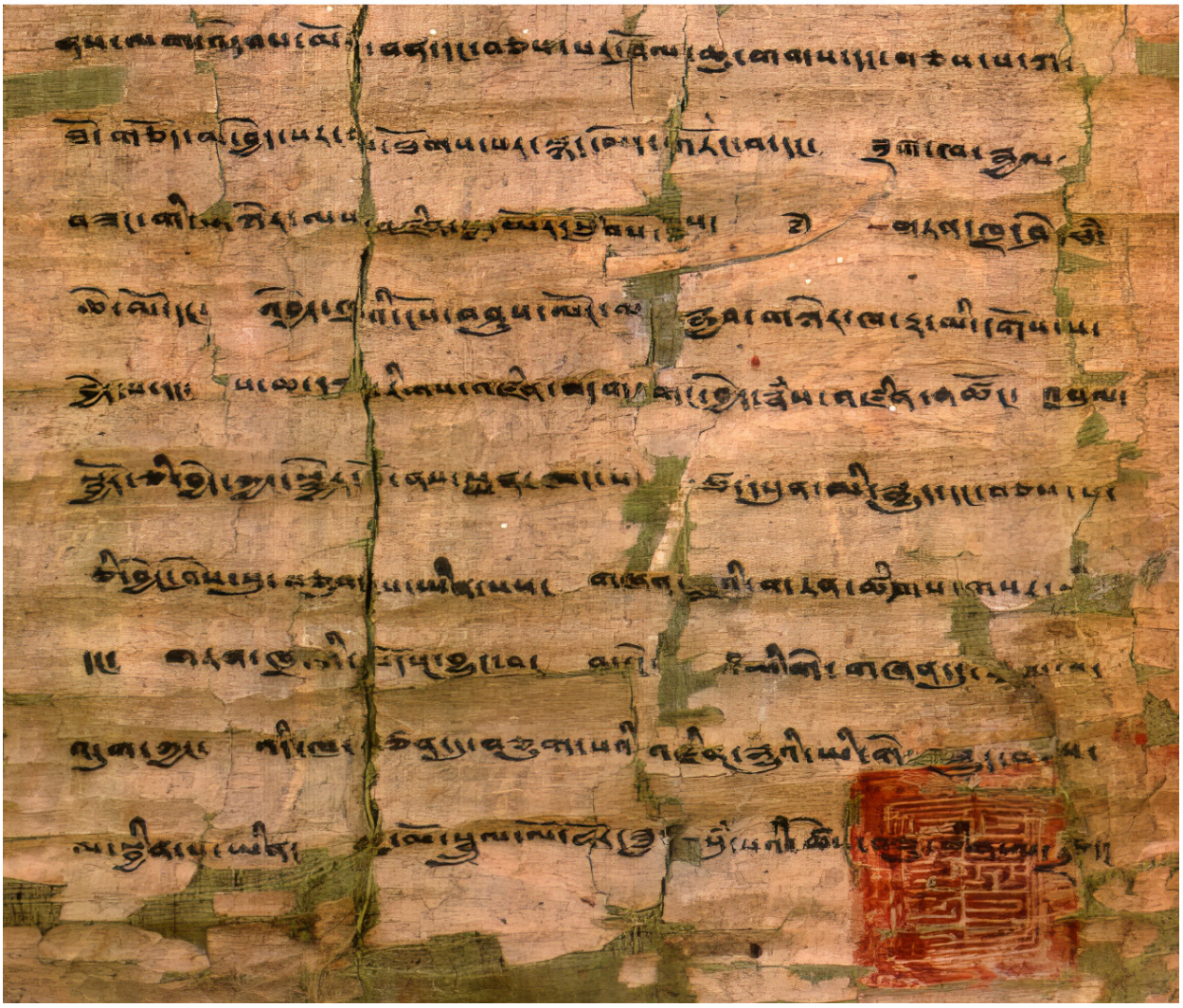












Document referring to SEAL 69

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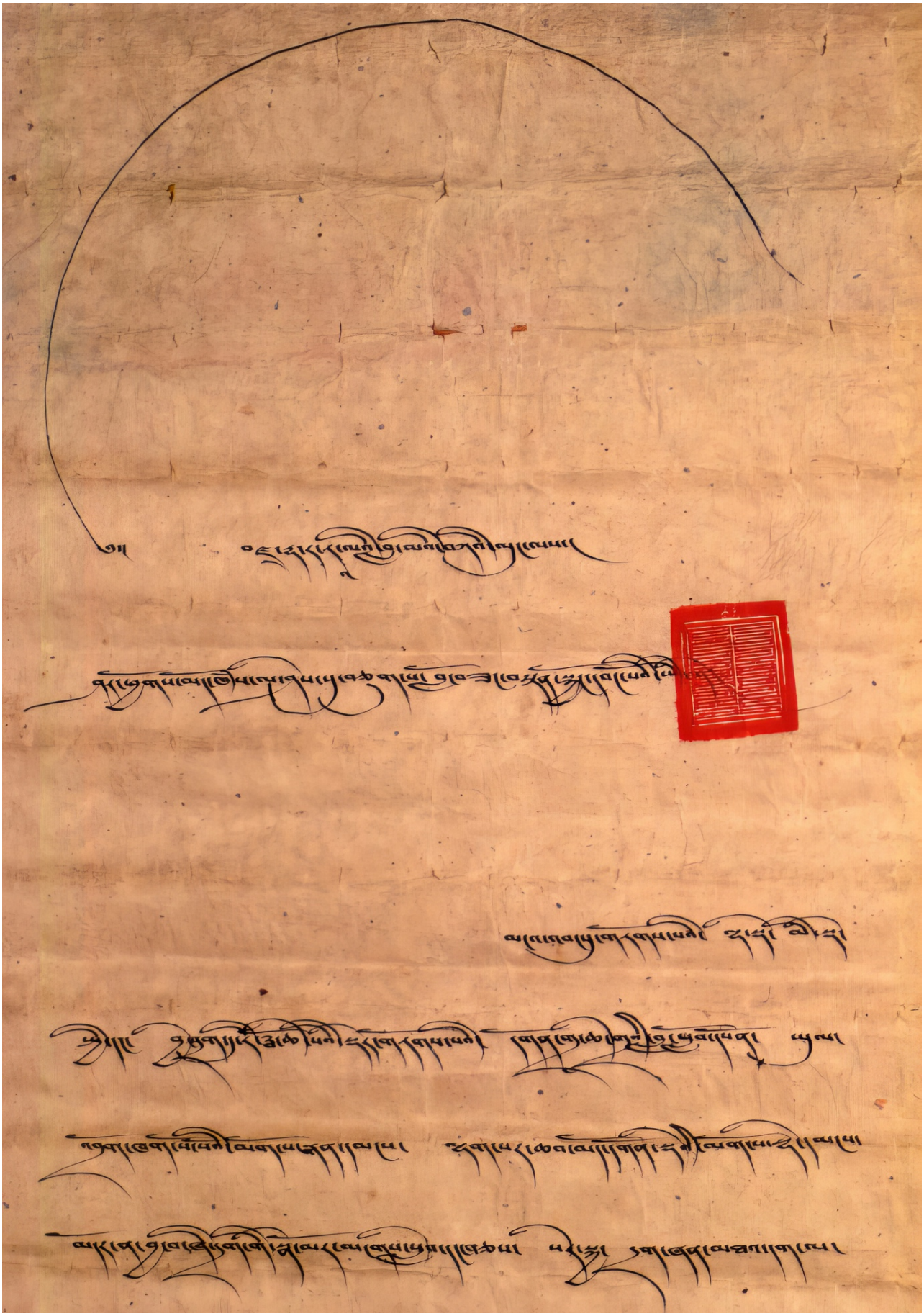
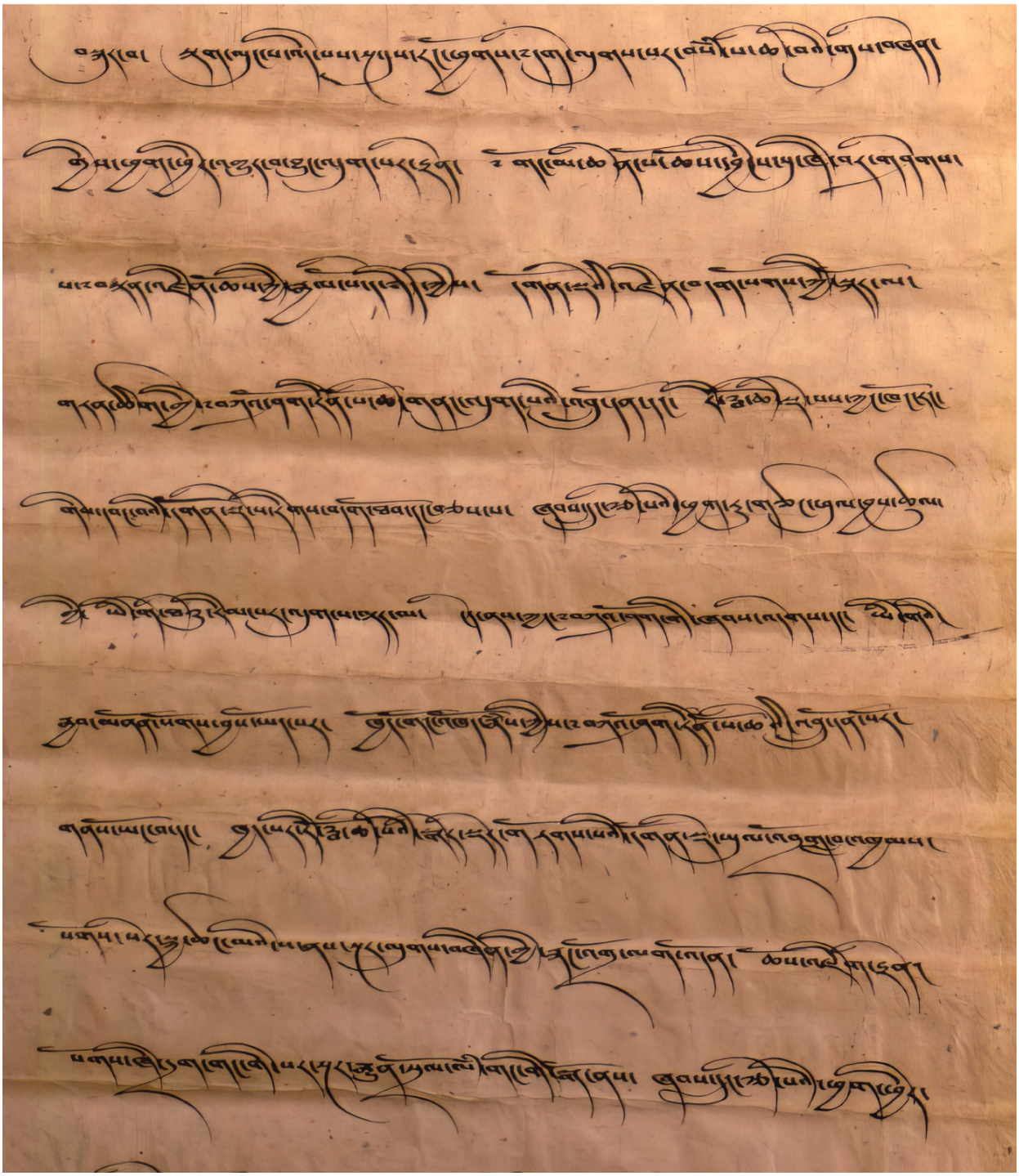
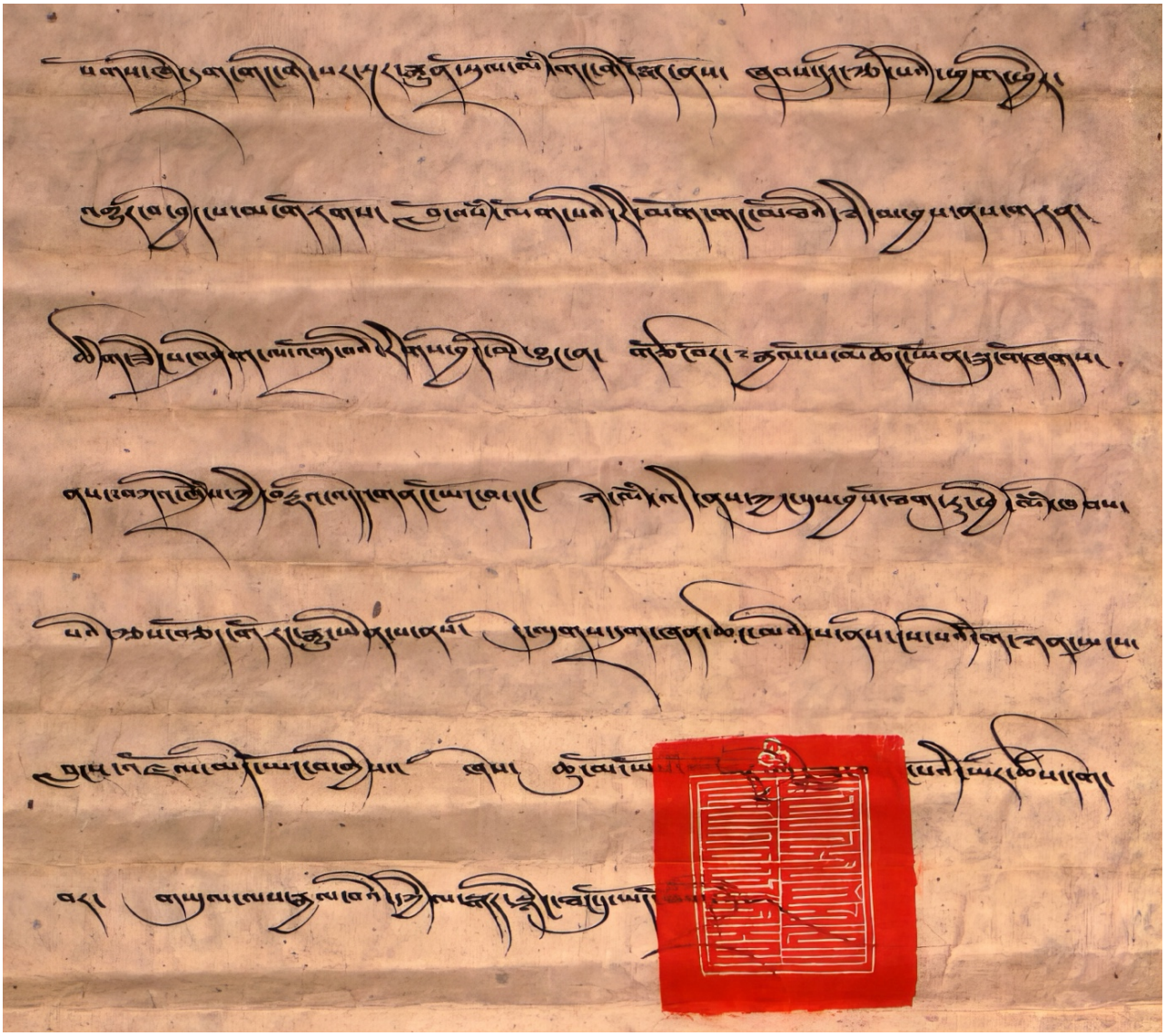
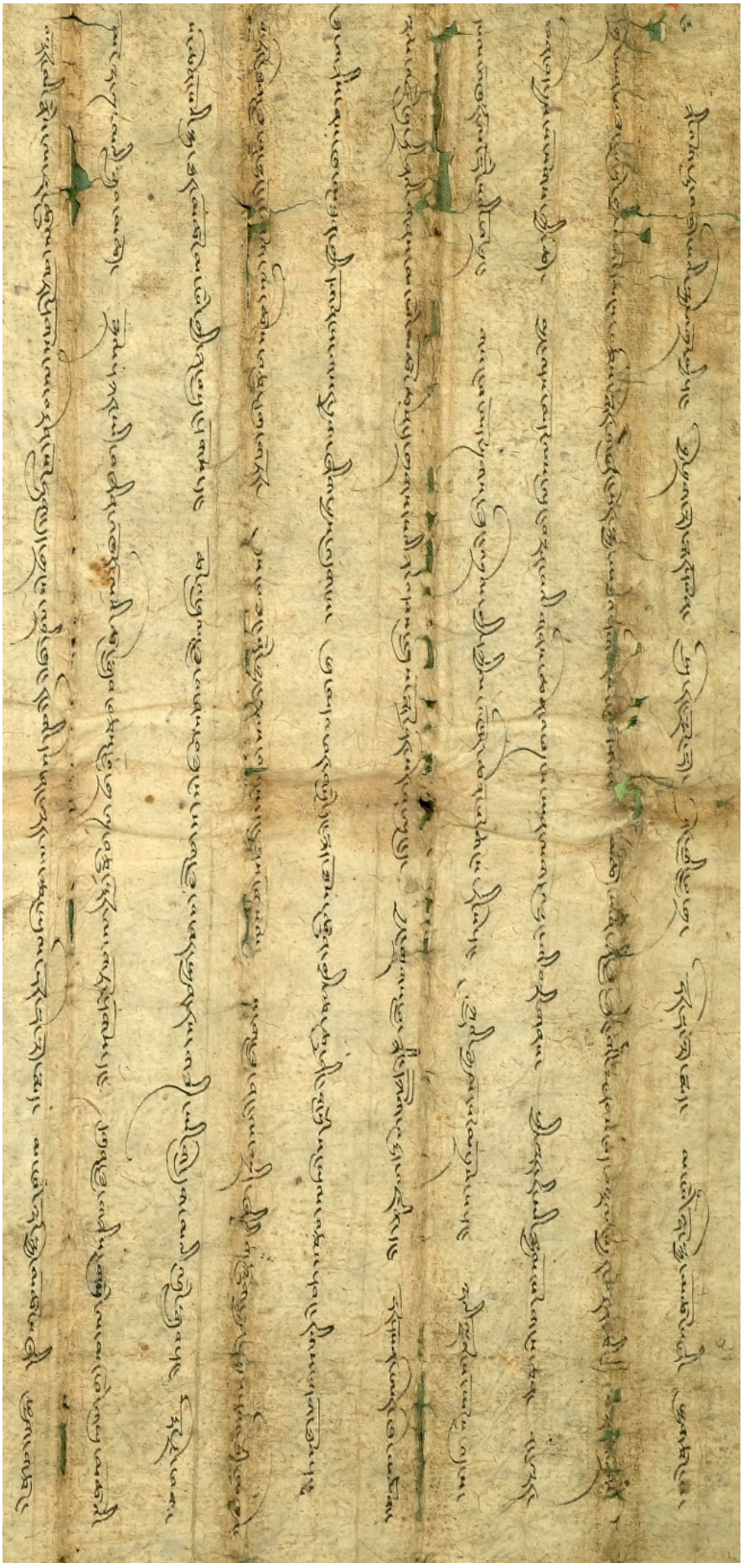


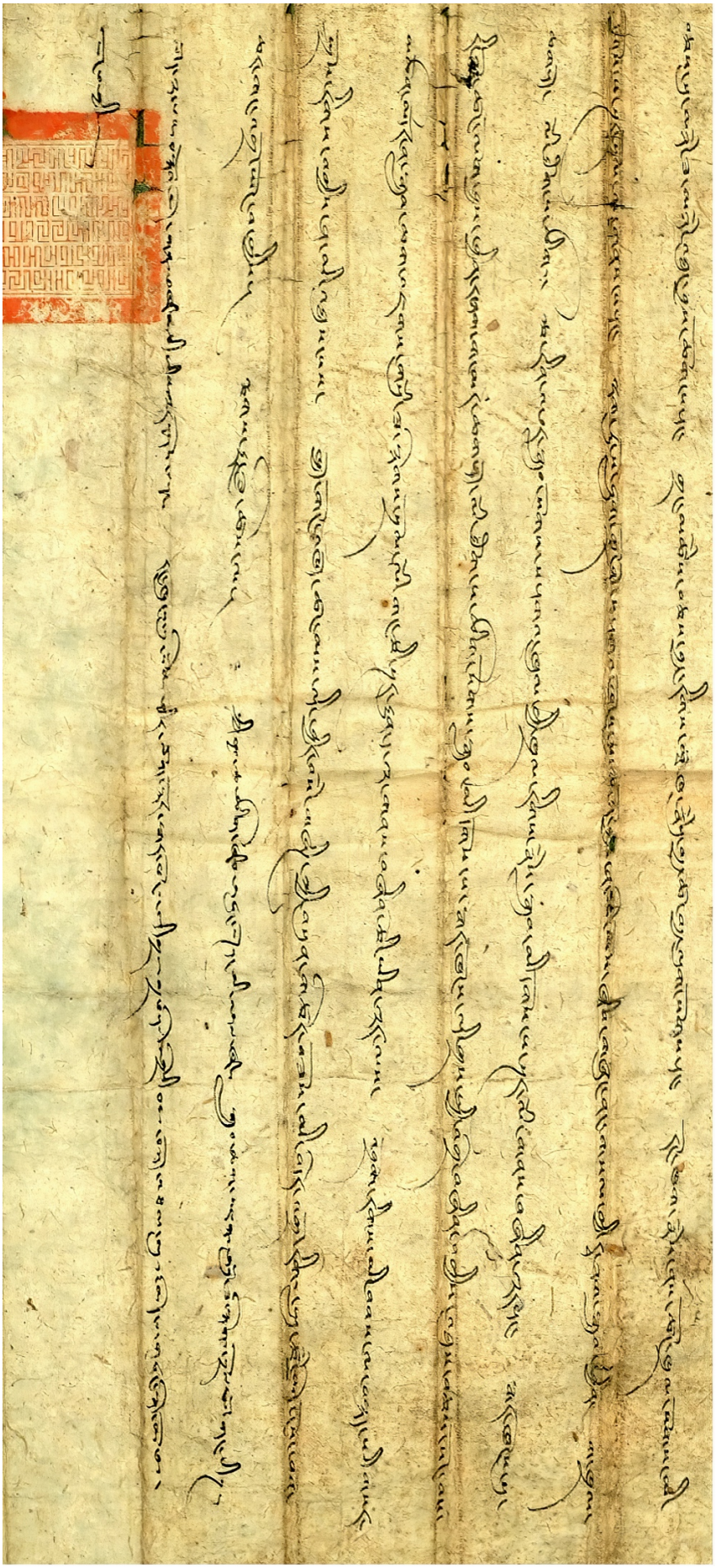




Document referring to SEAL 95

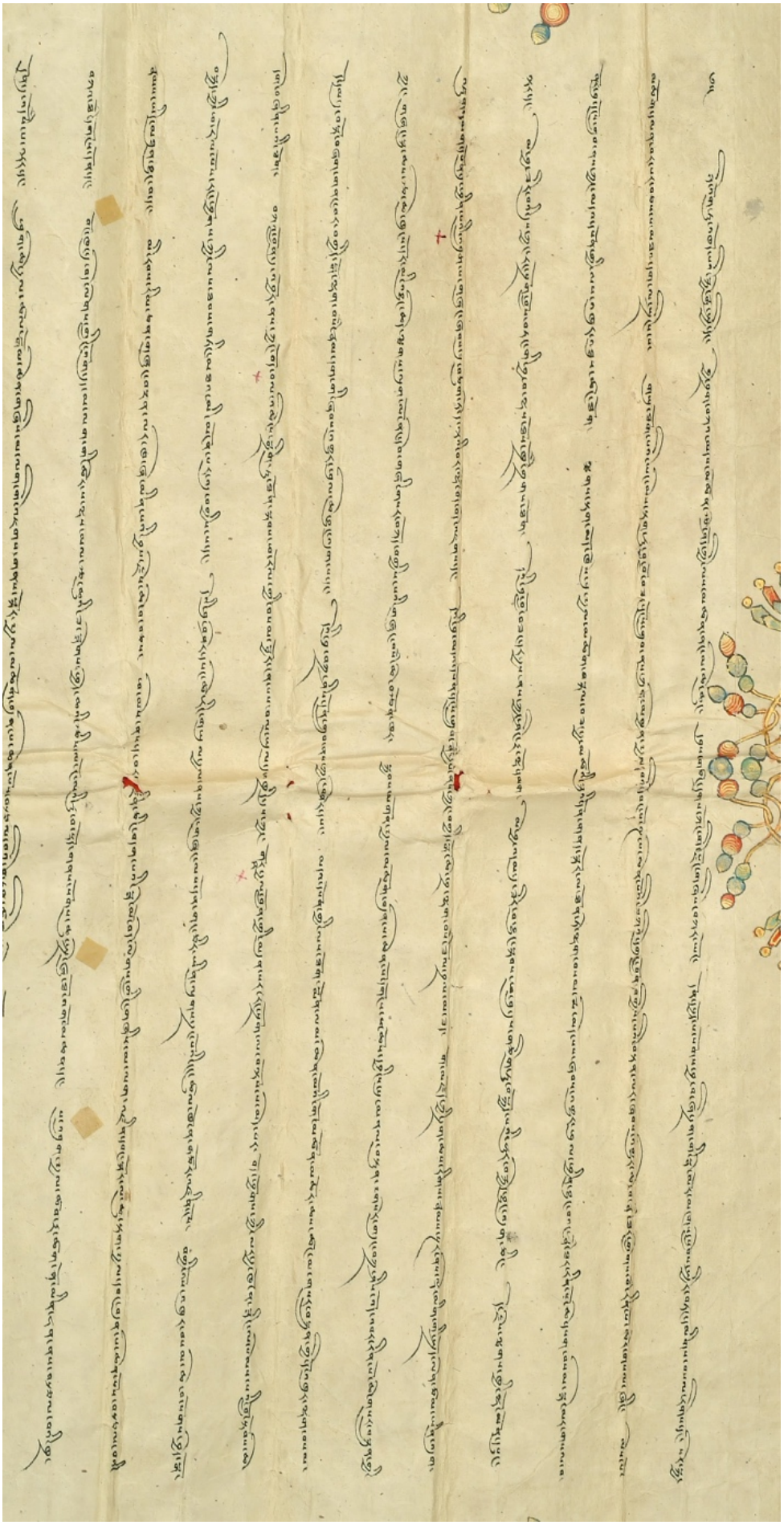
LTWA: 0837_LTWA_29

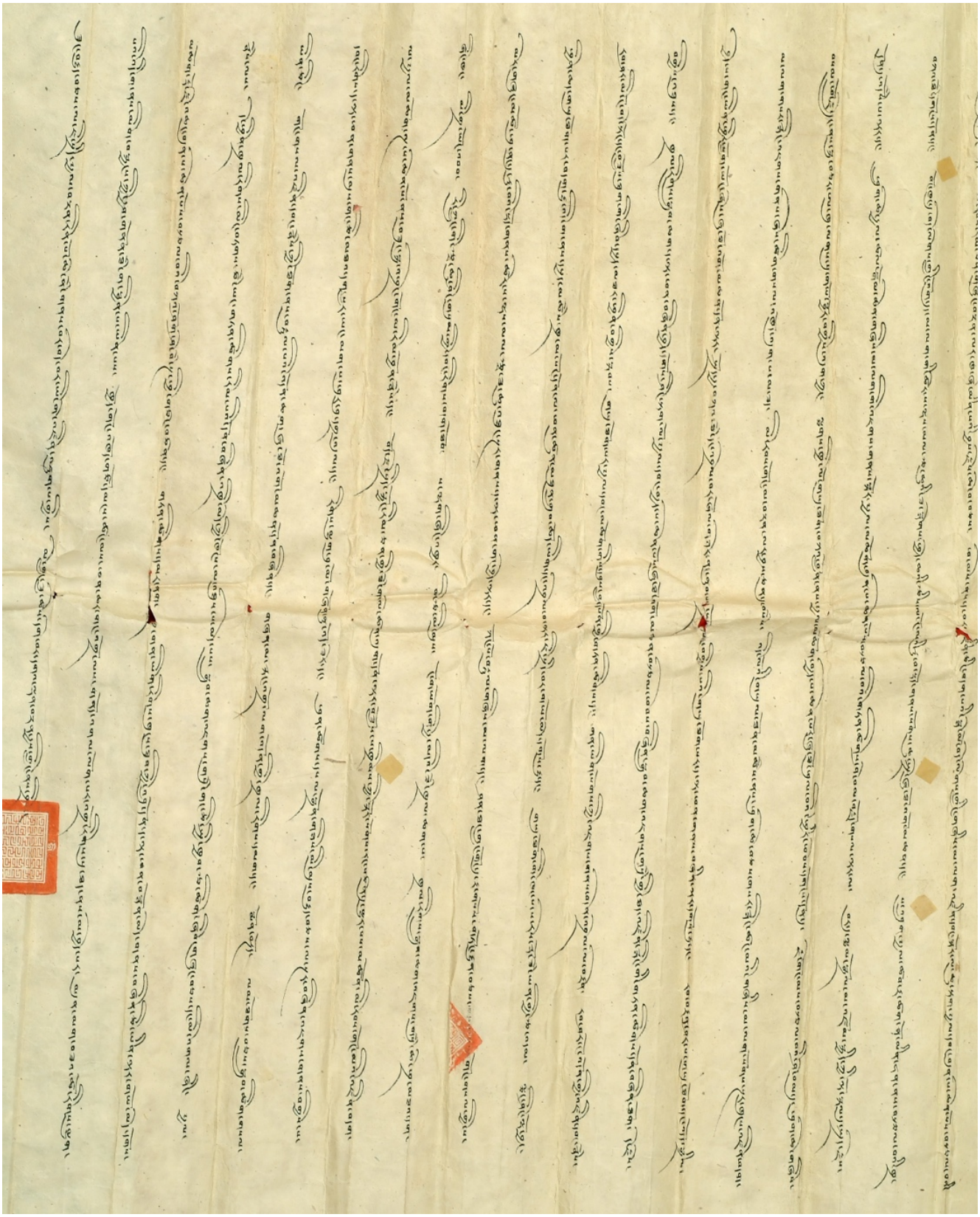




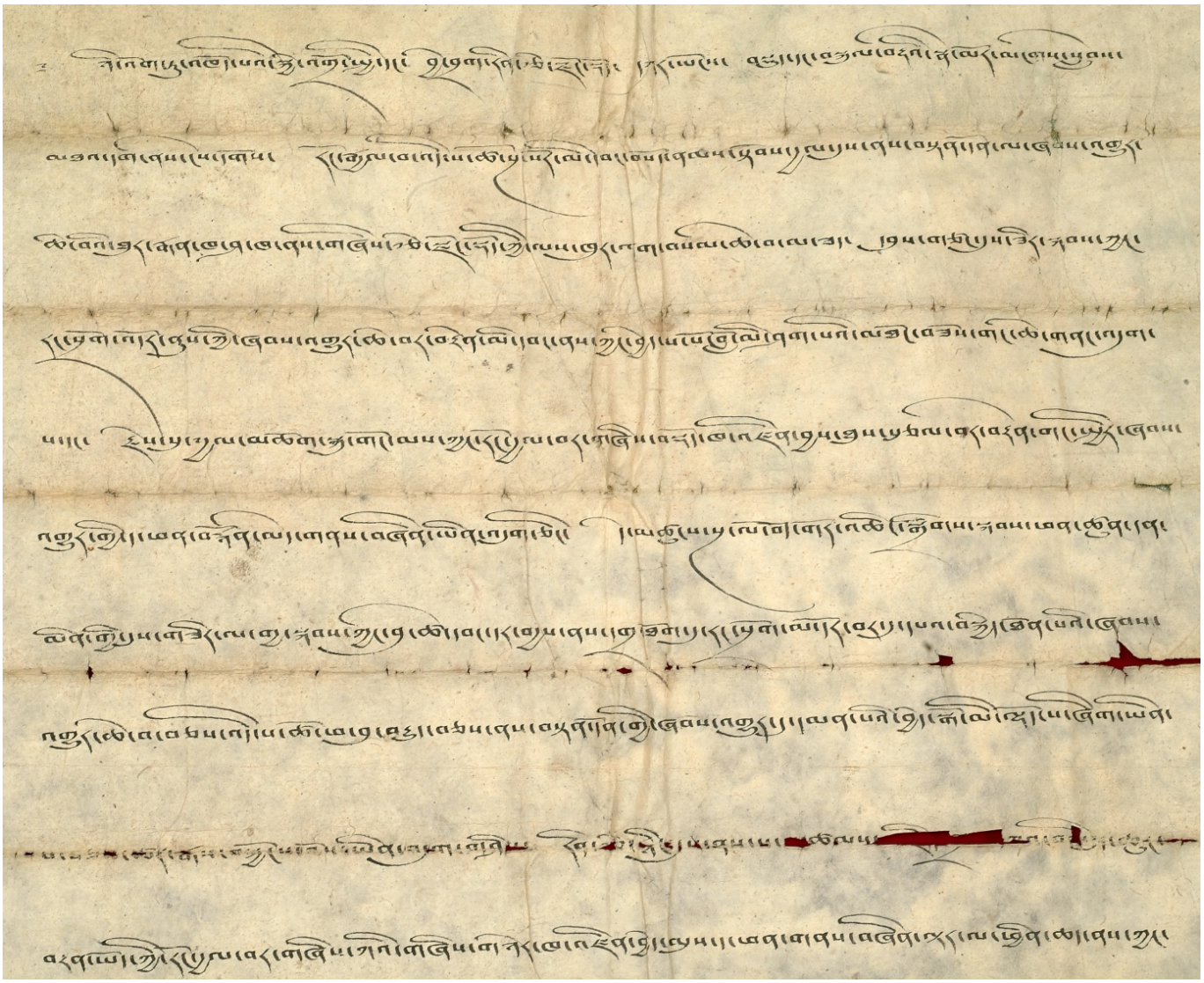
Document referring to SEAL 96

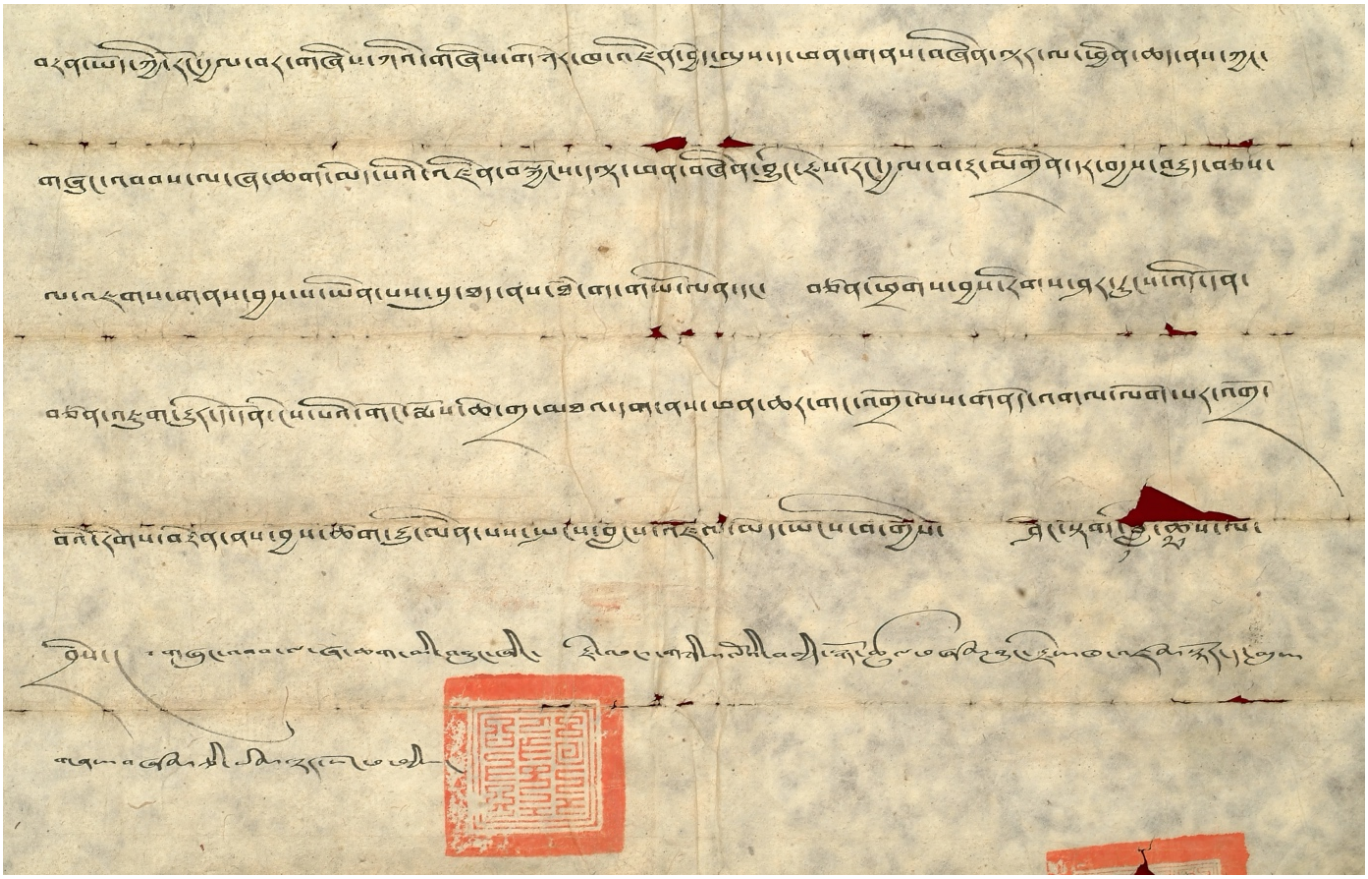
LTWA: 0877_LTWA_56

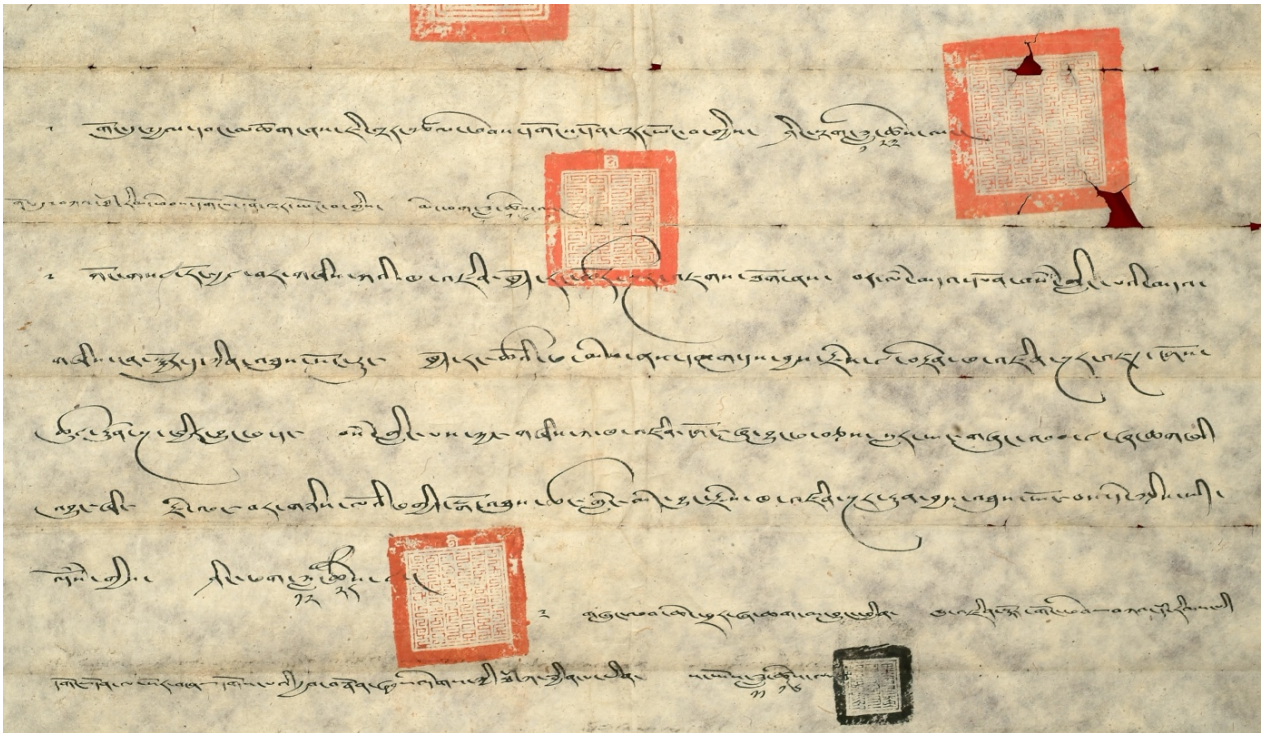




LTWA: 1408_LTWA_650

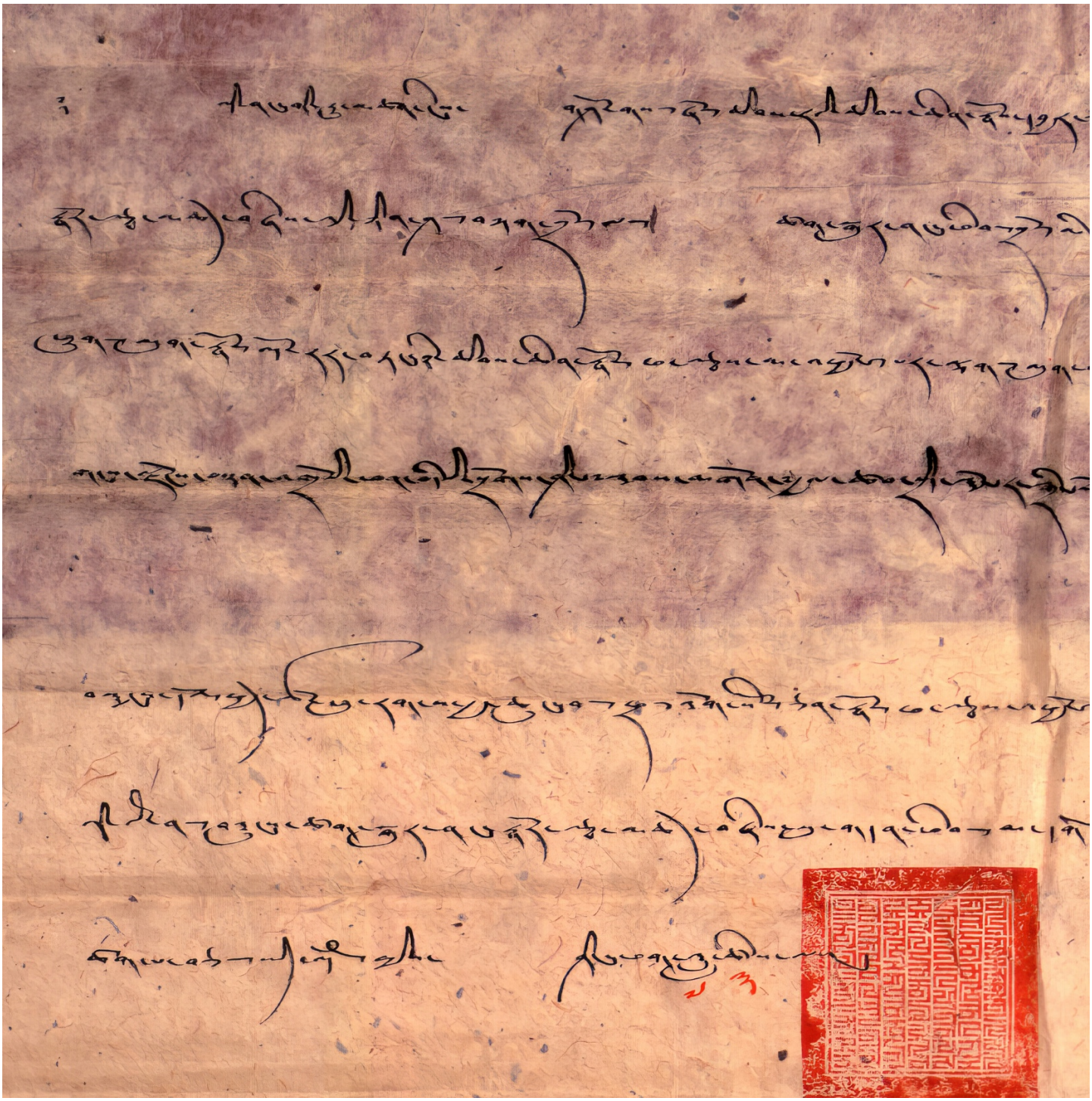






Document referring to SEAL 99

KDL: 012 2-1/#/63/37/4 (ID 1750)



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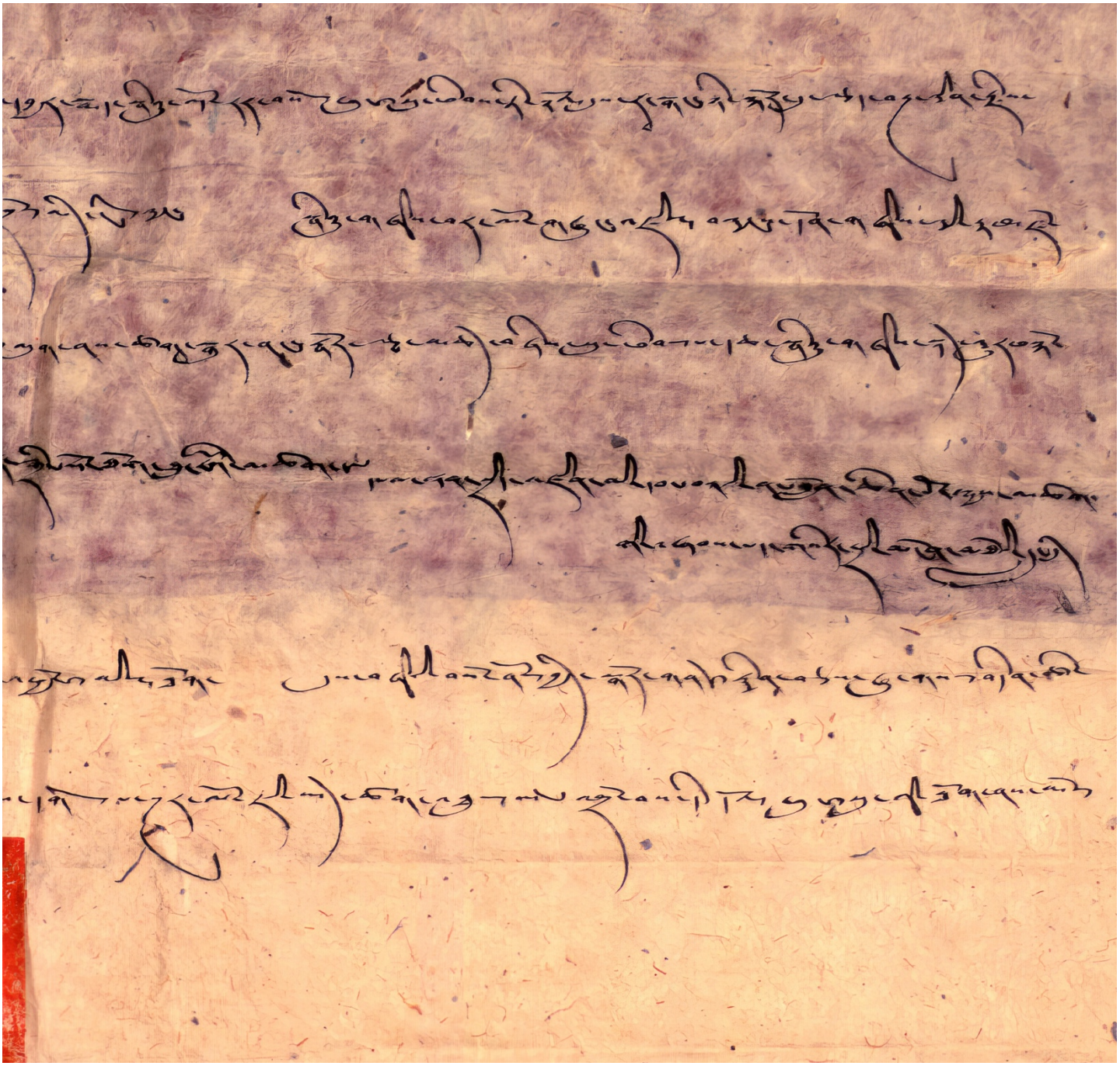

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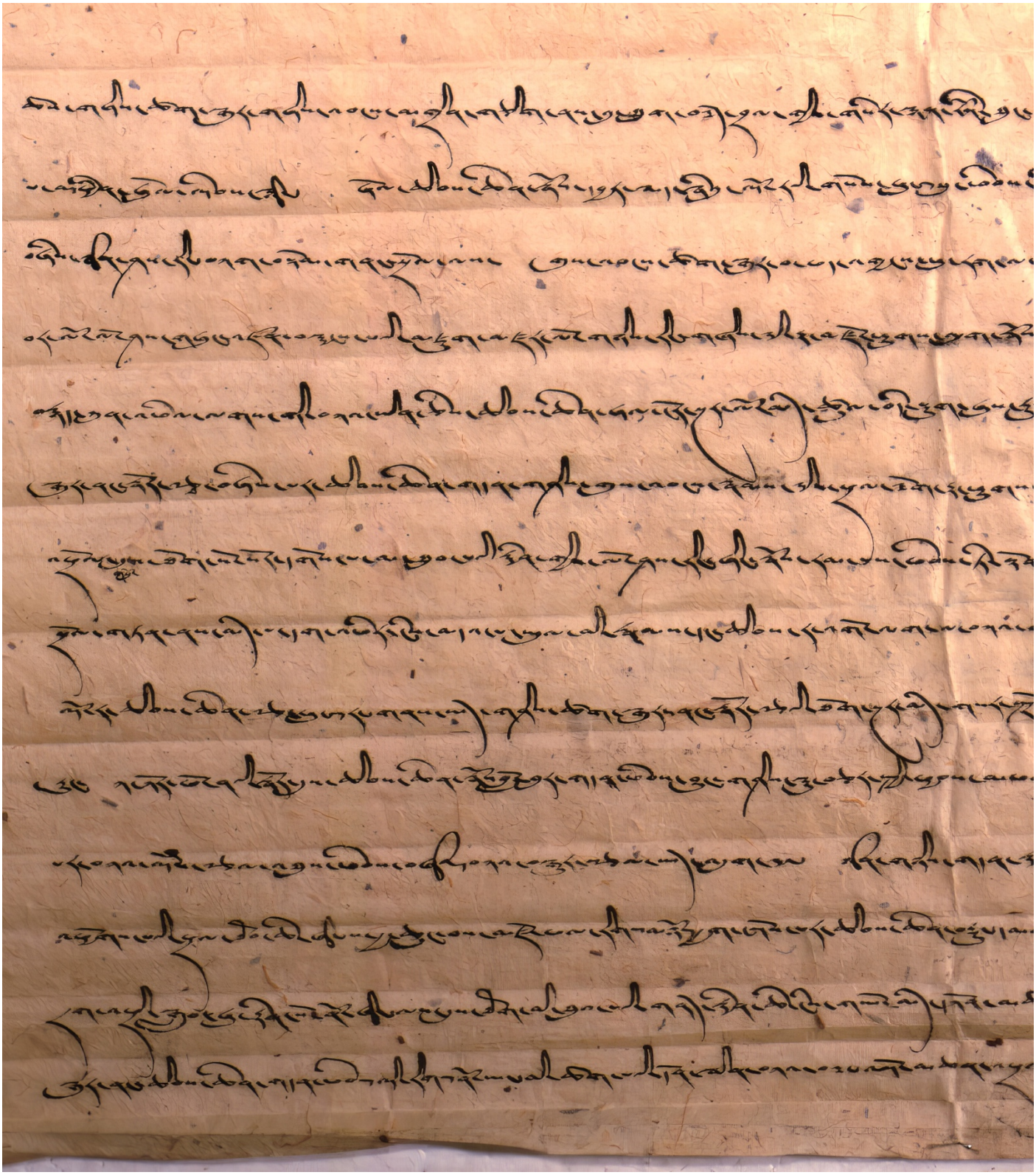

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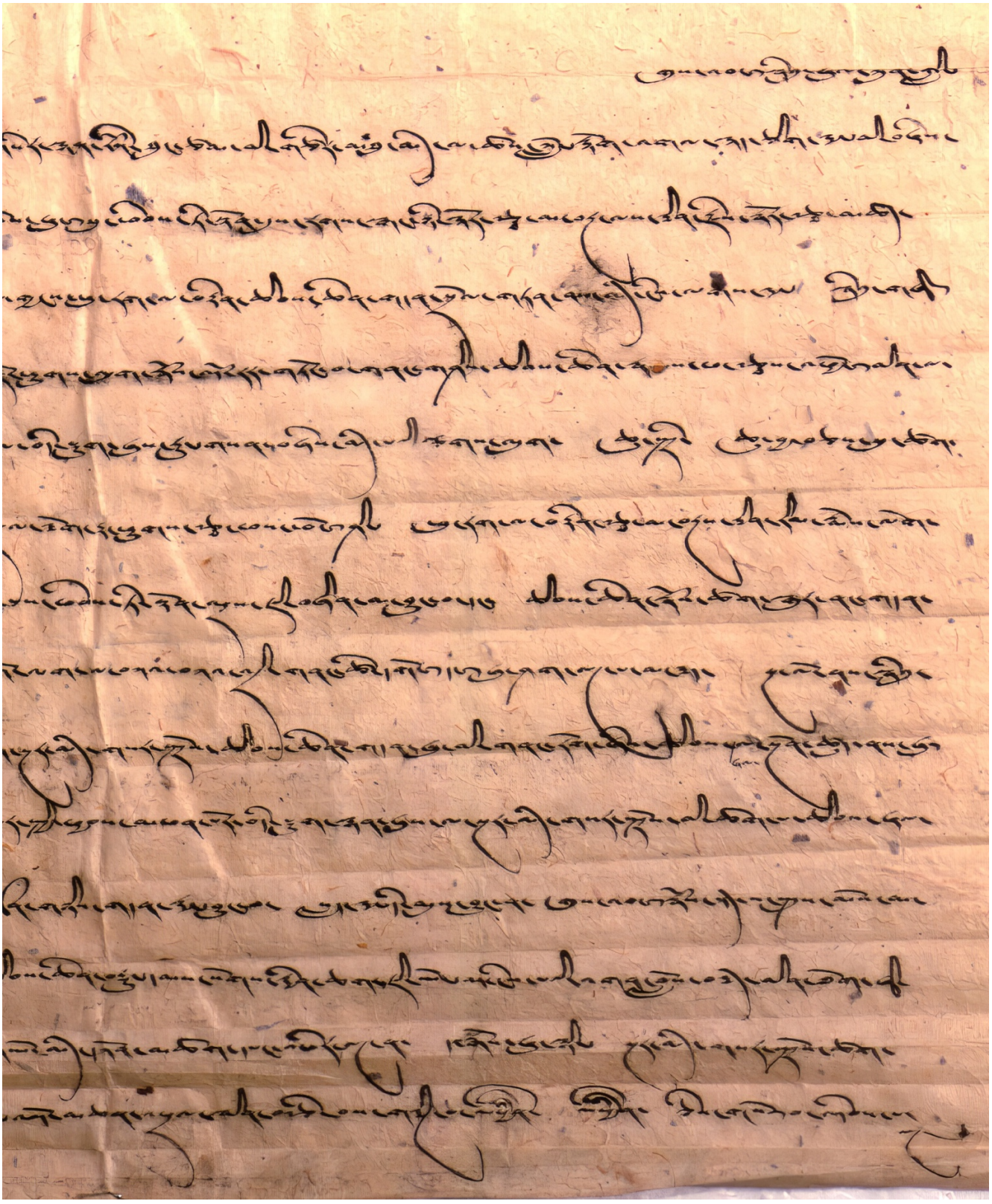

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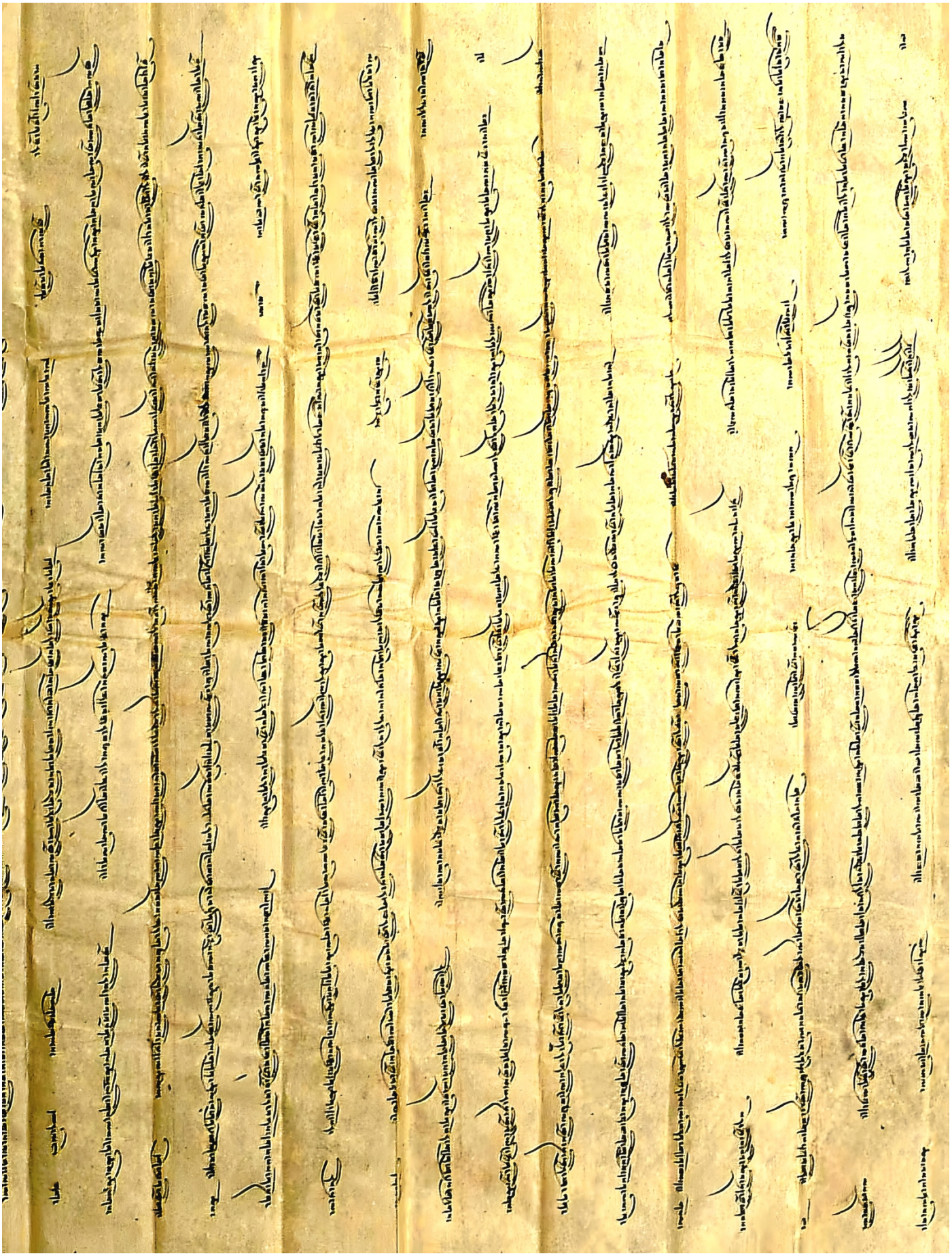
Document referring to SEAL 100

LTWA: 0939_LTWA_151

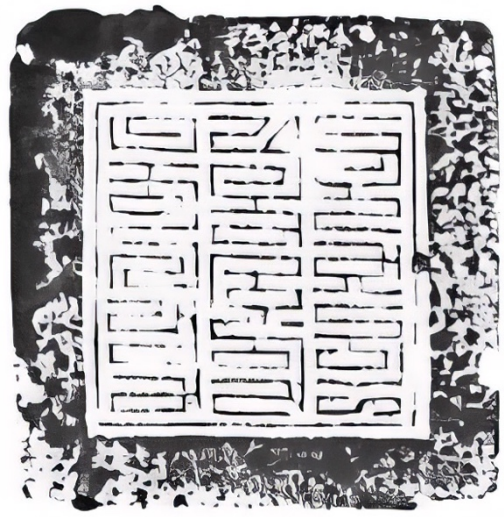


Document referring to SEAL 101

LTWA: 0949_LTWA_161

Appendix 2: The Seal of a Queen

The seal shown below belongs to the private collection of Christian Lequindre, who provided me with the photos and dimensions, along with a request to decipher the seal inscription. Unfortunately, he could no longer remember where he had acquired this object.



The seal is made of iron with gold inlay. It has a height of 6.2 cm. The side lengths at its base measure 2.3 cm. The inner edges of the stamp measure 1.7 cm. The inscription reads:

(1) *Z rgyal yum*
(2) *phun tshogs*
(3) *dbang mo dge P*

"Queen Phun tshogs dbang mo. May it be virtuous!"

So far I have only come across one queen with this name. She is mentioned as the wife of King bSod nams don grub rnam rgyal,[367] who appears in the genealogy of the kings of the petty kingdom of Zangla (bZang la) in Zangskar (Zangs dkar), Ladakh, for the twentieth century.[368]

[367] Neumaier 2002, 333n20.

[368] Francke 1926, 164, 165.

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AA: Collection of André Alexander. See *Digitized Tibetan Archives Material at Bonn University*.

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